


Are you listening?

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-1989
A64



Essays by
Ontario senior citizens
on what it means
to be a senior.



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FOREWORD

By The Honourable

Mavis Wilson

Minister for
Senior Citizens' Affairs,
Province of Ontario



“A re you listening? A senior loves to be heard.” These words, written by Lena Wright of Bramalea, gave the title to this book of essays by Ontario senior citizens.

Lena was one of 618 people who responded to an invitation in the quarterly newspaper *Especially for Seniors* to compose 500 words on what it means to be a senior. The writing competition was a 1988 Senior Citizens' Month initiative of the Ontario Advisory Council on Senior Citizens, which publishes EFS.

Several of the best essays have since been printed in *Especially for Seniors* and read on CBC Radio. But it was amply clear to the contest judges, to the editors of EFS, to the Advisory Council and to me that many more deserved a wide audience. Not only do they show the creative talent of Ontario seniors, but they contain a wealth of historical information and wisdom too precious to leave hidden.

This book opens the lid a bit wider on that treasure trove. My office is pleased and proud to publish *Are You Listening?* as a project of Senior Citizens' Month 1989. I congratulate the Advisory Council for inspiring these authors and applaud every one of the 618 Ontarians who put pen (or computer) to paper.

Mavis Wilson

A MESSAGE

from
Ivy St. Lawrence



The writings of Ontario seniors represented in this book are among the great personal rewards of my term as chairman of the Ontario Advisory Council on Senior Citizens, which expired at the end of March, 1989.

It was the council's newspaper, *Especially for Seniors*, which triggered this outpouring of creativity. Looking for ways to mark Senior Citizens' Month 1988, we hit upon the idea of an essay contest on the topic: "What does it mean to be a senior citizen?" The only prize we offered was to publish the winner in the newspaper.

We were astonished by the response. In an age that cultivates self-expression through tick-a-box, postage-paid questionnaires, no fewer than 618 of our readers took the time to write 500 words of prose and mail it to us at their own expense. Clearly, Ontario seniors had a lot to tell but too few opportunities to tell it.

What they told is here for you to read in the following pages. *Are You Listening?* documents their hopes, their dreams, their knowledge and their accomplishments. It is, I think, a remarkable snapshot of a generation.

Ivy St. Lawrence

INTRODUCTION

In the winter of 1988, *Especially for Seniors* asked its readers to write essays on what it means to be a senior citizen. The invitation opened a floodgate, through which flowed the memories, joys, sadnesses, humour, experience and wisdom of a generation.

The newspaper received 618 essays, including 14 written in French and one in Italian. *Are You Listening?* is a selection of the best of them. They appear in alphabetical order by author's name. Most are published as written. Some have been lightly edited for reasons of length, spelling or grammar, but not at all in terms of style. Circumstances described in some essays may have changed since the time of writing.

Each essay was unique, but some common themes emerged on what it means to be a senior. The commonest by far was that of freedom. Freedom from the tyranny of the alarm clock. Freedom from responsibilities of work and raising children. Freedom from want, thanks to pensions and benefits for seniors. Freedom to live as you please in this country of Canada.

The greatest joy: Grandchildren. The worst sadness: Loss of a spouse. The greatest leisure interest: Gardening. The greatest source of strength: God. The greatest loves: Your spouse, nature, pets and God, not necessarily in that order.

People wrote from their homes, from nursing homes and homes for the aged, from winter retreats in Florida, from hospital beds and from wheelchairs. Some, like army veteran Vincent Prozcek of Brampton, enlisted the help of younger friends to write down and send in their thoughts.

The tone of the writing was overwhelmingly upbeat. But there



were sad stories, too, like that of Augustine Ste. Croix of Thunder Bay whose housing nightmare left her with “pain that will never heal.” Of her anguished essay she wrote: “I know this will not be a winner, I just prayed that by putting it down on paper I may have peace of mind and get one good night’s sleep.”

The newspaper’s editors were left with the impression that the most valuable function of the essay contest may have been just that: To provide a reason for putting it down on paper. As Helga Wyler of Toronto said in a covering note with her entry, “Should my essay be the first to arrive, it is because the words were there, all ready in my mind. They needed only an invitation like yours to come forward and be typed. Thank you for letting me say it.”

—Robert M. Wilson



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E. JEAN ABRAMS

What does it mean to be a senior citizen? To me personally, it is like a ledger sheet with its debits and credits.

The credit side has many entries. The responsibility of raising children is past. The alarm clock is no longer needed to rouse me so I won't be late for work. It is great to get up when I feel like it. Staying up very late is no problem for I can catch up the next day. Shopping can be done whenever it is convenient. There is time to enjoy in grandchildren what was missed in the busyness of raising my own.

Values have changed and I can laugh now at the things that were so all-consuming: Did shoes and dress match? Was my hair all right? Did I do and say the right things to make a good impression? Who really cared? Suppose I'm not included in a party of friends for some event. Now it won't spoil the rest of my life. Maybe that friend who passed without speaking needs new glasses or is worrying about a problem. I won't write her off or be hurt as in days of yore. People tend to be more helpful in all ways and little children smile when you talk to them.

The debit side is full, too. My body with its increasing aches and pains can't keep up with my demands. Some days I have boundless energy and on others I'm lucky to crawl out of bed. I'm lost if I misplace my glasses and can't read without them. Worst of all, I forget names — not faces, but what they are called. They tell me I don't listen and they are probably right for my mind seems to be jumping from one thought to another like a cat on a hot griddle. Then there is the odd night when sleep takes flight and memories that bless and burn take over.

How does the balance fall? Debit or credit? I would say a large credit. I have been allowed to experience every age of life and have

seen many changes. I love to pass on stories of my holidays on my grandmother's farm when a child, to my grandchildren. I enjoy seeing their eyes widen when I tell about gathering eggs and in the process gathering chicken lice on my arms; about feeding the pigs a revolting mixture of sour milk, potato and sundry other peelings to the music of hundreds of buzzing flies; how heavy the pails of water were being carried from the pump to the house; and most of all, their incredulous expression as I describe the little house out back with the two holes and pages from Eaton's catalogue tacked to the wall nearby. They will probably never experience these things and I can help them do so vicariously.

Best of all, I know each day now is a bonus and look forward to the time when this aging body will be put off, like a worn-out garment. The ageless "me" inside, by the grace of God, will move on to my "house not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens," joining with loved ones gone before to praise God forever.

To be a senior citizen means the best is yet to be, the end for which the beginning was made.



GLADYS C. ATKINS

I am a senior citizen, but, as well, I am a person — the product of heredity, environment and of all the events of my life. The happiness, sorrows, achievements and disappointments have given me the ability to see life with a clarity of perception and appreciation not possible 50 years ago.

The beauty of a sunset, the flash of a hummingbird poised over a flower or the smile of a child can move me to tears. But, on the other hand, the slights or hurts, real or imagined, can wound more deeply than ever. I resent being ignored or merely tolerated, left out of a conversation or disregarded by a waitress. It doesn't happen often.

I love this beautiful world and have compassion (not pity) for its under-privileged, perhaps because I remember the years of Depression. The social benefits which seniors now enjoy compensate somewhat for the hard years and we should be grateful. We are able to live in a dignified manner with a sense of independence.

I am, though widowed, fortunate to be in my own home, to drive my car and be able to travel. My life might be compared to a river flowing along smoothly but with undercurrents below the surface. Under the serenity of small-town life, family and volunteer work, lies concern for personal, social, political and international problems.

The media keep me informed. I avoid self-pity and I do not worry for "to worry is to pay interest on a loan before it is due." I strive "to have the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference."

The future, in my view, holds great promise. Everywhere I see goodness and kindness, especially in time of need. This far outweighs the adverse aspects of crime, greed and so on. Our young people are

enterprising, imaginative and innovative far beyond my generation. Of course, their education and opportunities exceed ours in the same proportion. Or so we like to think.

As the eddies surface on the river, so, in the silence of the night or in the darkest hours before the dawn, a thought emerges in my mind. "I love this world but I must leave it—perhaps soon." But I have lived and loved. I have children and grandchildren of whom I am very proud. Somewhere along the way I must have done some good or left a pleasant memory. If so, I have not lived in vain. The future holds no fear.



WILLIAM R. BAKER

Oh, the joy of it — comfort, stability, relaxation! NO WORK! But if you want to work, there is the smug satisfaction that you can quit anytime. You've got it made, right? If you choose not to work, grand vistas open before you. All those exotic places you've dreamed of visiting; the golf courses where you can play every day of the week; no more battling the traffic and crowds on weekends. And you'll have lots of time to do it, too. Why, you've heard of lots of seniors who are full of the old moxie well into their 80s, and hey, even their 90s. What a nirvana of delight awaits you!

But wait. This is just one side of the coin. The other side can be found in the nursing homes, the chronic hospitals; the sick and the maimed; the blind and the feeble. And for countless seniors who still have their health, there is the desperate, unending struggle against poverty, against loneliness, and (for some) against the disillusionment of living with families who no longer want them and consider them a burden. Too often we are beguiled by the happy seniors boarding the sightseeing buses, cavorting about the dance floor or toning up the old muscles in the gym.

Scenario: The formal is in full swing at the prestigious seniors' club. Black ties and tails waltz sedately with the sequined gowns to the strains of an expensive orchestra. The tables are sumptuously laid and the wine sparkles in reflected candlelight. The glitz and the glitter! Ah, we see it all. But do we see the grey faces peering in at the window?



JACK BEAUMONT

Being a senior means that for the first time in my life I have freedom. As small children we are soon tied into the regimentation of the school, and on through the various levels until we enter the workforce, where we face even stricter rules and regulations, until, if we live long enough, we are allowed to retire.

As a widower with my own home, I am able to keep busy with work around the house and in the garden, but I can set my own starting and stopping times, and enjoy my coffee breaks without a thought to setting an alarm clock or having to work overtime or weekends. No more production quotas, interdepartmental memos (in triplicate, of course), no orders from above, and no worrying about maintaining my health and skills in order to survive in the rat-race.

Now I am at liberty to choose a suitable day for a drive into the countryside to explore some of the smaller towns and villages (many of which I never knew existed before) and wander around, maybe asking someone to suggest a good place to have a meal. And I find that everyone is happy to help. I also find that, as a white-bearded senior, I am able to stop and chat with young mothers with babies. I have learned a lot of new names for babies, but there are still a great many of these gurgling creatures out there with what some people call old-fashioned names. One young lady, all of 18 months old, looked at my beard and thought I was Santa Claus.

Now I have the freedom to do my shopping during the quieter daytime hours, and here again there is an advantage in being a senior because it seems that everyone wants to look after me. If I should take my time going through the produce section, more often than not some

nice lady in my own age group will come over and instruct me in the finer points of selecting the right head of lettuce or stalks of celery, and tell me what is good for me and how to prepare it in order to get the best value for my money.

There is also more contact with my neighbours, many of whom are in the senior range, and more time to enjoy the beauty of the natural things around us. In fact, after all these years, I even have time to gaze at the full moon, and, in spite of our present-day space-age technology, I can still marvel at its brightness and mystique.

But sometimes, this freedom also allows me to close my doors, relax in the quietness and solitude of my own surroundings, and — as we all do — let my thoughts drift back to other times and places, and perhaps shed a few tears for the things that might have been, but never were, and never will be.



RAE BENNETT

W hat does it mean to be a senior? I am confused. No, not that way.

I know well seniors, sick seniors, wise seniors, energetic seniors, lazy seniors, rah-rah seniors, whiney seniors, then of course there is I, myself.

I consult the dictionary — a Blackie 1890 edition.

“A senior — an authority figure; one of superior learning.”

Since I am a dictionary addict, curiosity overtakes me. What then is a junior?

“One of inferior learning.”

* * * * *

“Just going out, Nan,” called my granddaughter, aged 17. “Would you like me to show you how to use the ghetto blaster? You put the cassette here you turn on this these little green lights are going all the time there, it’s on. Just adjust according to understand, Nan?”

“No!”

“I’ll teach you properly when I get home.”

According to Blackie I am of inferior learning.

“Send me a rental typewriter,” I requested to the rental agency. “I have to type a literary gem.”

“Know how to work this machine, Gran’ma?” enquired the early-teen delivery boy, looking at me quizzically. “See — you depress this, poke that; this bell rings; that red light appears; that green light tells you say Gran, try it out. I’ll stop on my return journey and teach you properly.”

My laboured efforts produced a colourful musical performance redolent of the Can-Can in “Gaieté parisienne”. I needed, really needed, some instruction. A 16-year-old boy was going to teach me.

I learned to drive when I was 68. I went to “Driver Ed.” (If you are going to school you need to know the lingo.)

The seniors were 16 plus some months; they had previous instruction. I was on the other side of the class with the juniors.

“She’s in my class,” I heard a youngster answer his friend as they ran down the school staircase four steps at a time. I tried not to stumble as I held onto the stair-rail, descending sideways, one step at a time. Gosh — I’m learning to drive.

My own laundry facilities are a tub-like obscenity and a basket of clothes pins. “I will teach you how to use my new electronic laundry system,” offered my daughter. You press this, you

Glory be, here we go again. Will I ever stop learning?

I am confused no longer. My definition of a senior is: “A senior is a junior.”

What a lift to my self-esteem. I can live to give Methuselah a run for his money and still be learning, learning, learning.

I am just now going out to buy myself a microwave, electronic of course, and hey dig this ad “Learn to ski Olympic style, Juniors welcome,” and where on earth is that Elderhostel booklet?



R.A. BOYLE

Hail, seniors, and congratulations! We are, without doubt, members of a unique, never-to-be-duplicated generation — an exclusive club, if you will.

Most of us, in our youth, have endured bone-rattling rides over gravel roads in horse-drawn buggies, or been exhilarated by the smooth, silent passage of cutters through frosty, white countrysides, our lower extremities pampered by heated stoves and buffalo robes.

Time-eroded, but still in the computer memory bank, are thoughts of pre-electricity, pre-plumbing days. Then, the comforts of home included shelter from the elements as we wandered from the kitchen to the summer kitchen, through the woodshed to the two-holed haven and Eaton's catalogue. Hard to forget is the Saturday night bath in the wooden tub which sadistic suppliers always designed with sharp edges. The stove-top irons were pushed aside to ready room for the pots of hot water, and the stove cistern was filled to capacity. Needless to say, Saturday was the best day to beat the rugs at spring-cleaning time.

In considering the changes of our lifespan, let us not forget the wonderful world of underwear. Until the end of World War I, it was *de rigueur* to wear fleece-lined underwear in colder times. Outdoors, great. Indoors, it was impossible to obey the modern adage of "never let them see you sweat." When you wrapped that fluffy fleece around your ankles, they took on a Clydesdale look. That underwear was the cause of certain colds which we endured, in a Kleenex-less society, with hypersaturated handkerchief.

Then came the automobile, the alternative to steam-engine trains for longer trips. With it came a whole new world to be explored:

engines to be cranked, rumble seats to be enjoyed, inner tubes to be patched, mica side curtains, gas tanks under back seats, and paved roads!

In swift succession we said goodbye to horsewhips, ice houses, ice boxes, ice men, cream-top milk bottles delivered daily, bread men, junk men, and pump-it-yourself washing machines. We said hello to hitch-hikers, tourists, travelling salesmen, caddies, flappers, crystal sets and aeroplanes. We were presented with radios, talking pictures, colour movies, and another war.

That tore it! After the war, things really speeded up. Computers, jet travel, earth orbiting, men on the moon, space travel, space probes, colour television with cable, converters and remote control. We even have heart and lung transplants. In the future, it will be the experienced brains of the senior citizens that will be transplanted in the younger.

I tell you, we present batch of seniors have seen it all. We have it all, except world peace (and the good book says we'll never achieve that).

So, seniors, rejoice. We've seen more, we've experienced more, we've wondered and worried more, than any generation in history.

Hail seniors, and congratulations!



M. ELIZABETH CHALMERS

What does it mean to be a senior?

It could mean only that you have survived more than 65 years of the natural progression from birth to death. Or it could mean that you have lived more than 65 years and are poised on the threshold of the most exciting future mankind has ever known.

Being a senior means we are living in a unique world of choices—a world that is only open to seniors.

We can choose to retreat into the safe, secure memory world of the past, or to plunge boldly into the challenging world of the future. Or, within microseconds, we can choose to touch the peaks of both worlds while living life to the fullest in each moment of time.

We can savour the taste of wild strawberries ripening on a sun-drenched hillside one dewy morning half a century ago, or dream of the heady bouquet of wine fermented from grapes grown in a satellite in space.

We can travel lazily down narrow, tree-lined roads behind the lulling clip-clop of horses' hooves, listening to the drowsy hum of bees sucking sweetness from the wild roses, or we can plunge into the glorious noise of city streets seeking the adventures of life in the fast lane. We can thrill to the scream of jets hurtling through the skies at speeds which leave the sound far behind, their comet tails criss-crossing the firmament with paths that have transformed the world of isolated alien communities into one giant village in which we all live.

We can share memories with those who are old, remembering how we moved with trepidation into the world of today. We can share the uneasy questions of the young who are stepping with apprehension into the world of tomorrow.

As we move from the past to the future, we come to realize that the point in time where the past and the future interface is always the

moment of time in which we live, and this is the moment in time that we must live to the fullest.

The past is a great place to visit but to live in it denies life, for life is never stagnant. The present has been given to us to select the memories to be stored and the dreams to be woven.

Being a senior means that we have received the ultimate gift of having a present in which to live, a past to remember and the future to anticipate. We can be travellers in time enjoying the wonders of three worlds.



S. CHAREL

Être une personne âgée, qu'est-ce?

Le jour où j'ai lu l'annonce de votre concours, on fêtait dans mon milieu le 90^e anniversaire de naissance d'une grand'mère. Cent soixante-deux descendants assistaient à la fête et la plupart des neveux et nièces l'appelaient "ma tante". Elle, débordante de paroles aimables et de sourires non fictifs, circulait dans l'assemblée, heureuse de la joie qu'éprouvaient les siens. Peut-on mieux exprimer ce que veut dire être une personne âgée?

Quand on atteint la soixantaine, on oublie parfois la signification que prend cet âge aux yeux des autres et des siens, qu'ils soient du même âge, en pleine maturité ou dans les rangs de la jeunesse.

Je passe sous silence l'infime minorité de ceux qui pensent, souvent sans le dire, que la personne âgée est un être usé et morose, inactif et sans but... Pour eux cette personne attend!

Pour mes congénères, l'idée de la vie offre des variétés plus positives. Être âgée signifie prendre un repos bien mérité. Si pour quelques-uns repos veut dire ne rien faire, la majorité estime que c'est un temps où il faut changer d'occupation et prendre le travail avec plus de liberté. On voit alors la personne âgée entreprendre une foule d'activités familiales et sociales que le labeur quotidien et souvent les vacances annuelles n'ont pas permis d'exécuter.

Aux yeux de l'âge mûr, la personne âgée jouit d'une nouvelle popularité: on aime taquiner ces retraités parce qu'on envie leur sort. Ces derniers attendent leur désir de parvenir à cet âge, jusqu'à leur faire dresser des plans pour ce futur...

Quant aux jeunes qui regardent agir les personnes âgées, ils ne sont pas loin de les qualifier de héros. Un coup d'oeil sur le passé leur révèle comment, sans les merveilles de la science et le confort moderne, ils ont pu accomplir des choses et des choses... Il faut les

voir s'étonner devant les "matinaux" et les "couche-tôt", la vie de famille et les loisirs d'hier: "Est-il vrai que vous aviez des représentations et des concerts? des clubs de ci, de ça...?"

Cette valeur aux yeux des autres redouble de force quand il s'agit des siens. Alors congénères, âge mûr et jeunes expriment, chacun à leur façon, une légitime fierté de famille.

Tandis que les aînés se remémorent leurs prouesses, les fils romancent l'époque de leur enfance, sans oublier la fois où... pris au piège, ils ont dû subir une verte semance. Souvenirs d'école, de fêtes religieuses, de noces et de baptêmes, etc., le tout arrosé du piquant qui fait sourire. Ma soeur m'écrivait encore hier: "Disons merci à nos parents de nous avoir fait ce que nous sommes."

Faut-il maintenant dire ce qu'est pour moi la personne âgée? Elle est avant tout celle qui a suivi son chemin avec fidélité, patience et amour. Moins préoccupée par le passé que par le présent, elle n'arrête pas sa marche. L'expérience lui crie encore que l'efficacité vient moins de ce que l'on dit que de l'exemple qu'on donne. C'est pourquoi des autres, la personne âgée cherche l'admiration, un échange de confiance et de joie.

Ma vieille de 90 ans le manifestait avec sincérité.



BESSIE ELLIS CHRISTIAN

When I was eight I longed to be eighteen. Never mind the years between — there would always be many, many more. Just to be like my mother with her long, swishing skirts and her high-heeled boots that made such intriguing prints in the soft earth.

Childhood, starry-eyed, impatient!

Yes, little girl, it has been fun to make footprints, to gather dreams and treasures. To pass milestones sometimes even drenched with tears. That is why at this end of the spectrum I can, in memory, see the footprints of those who have crossed my path and enriched my life. Some for a little time and some, like my well-beloved's, still beside mine in these sunset years. I remember my gentle grandmother holding my hand and saying, "Dear, you'll never know the time till you're as old as I am." How right she was! Now, as I hold other little hands I am warmed by their love, even as she must have been by mine.

Seniors, that is how we are known. A title of respect earned in the school of life. No special letters after our names. Just a heart full of living from having met and successfully passed the challenges of the years.

And, what a fortunate people we are! Pampered, you might say, in this good land of Canada. Do we appreciate this loving care? Indeed we do. In return we have so much to give. Our spirits do not grow wrinkled and old; our wits, dulled. Resilient — I love that word, dear friends, don't you? That's what we are. Still able to meet challenges and uphold truth. Even considered a force to be reckoned with in world affairs!

Decades, not now to be squandered; precious time treasured as a miser's gold. These are bonus years and, in spite of some disabilities, to be received as a gift, gratefully and savoured to the full.

As a lovely day closes out with a glowing sunset and the promise of an even better tomorrow, this can be ours, also. Thank you, Lord.



WILBERT A. CRAWFORD

A senior has lived! He has gained insight in his fields of endeavour. He has tried and tested many ideas and theories, participated in events which have led to the accumulation of knowledge or skill. These have contributed to his mature store of experience. He has gained expertise, met perplexing problems, weathered storms of various kinds. He knows his capabilities and limitations.

A senior is confident because of the wisdom acquired in meeting various life situations head-on. He has come to the conclusion that life is not what happens to him, but what he does with what happens to him. His experiences, which at the time may have been difficult to endure, are now sweet to remember; they are yesterday's answer to today's problems.

Having met the requirements of the preceding three score years the senior is presented with an opportunity for expansion.

Becoming a senior is not the beginning of the end, it is the end of the beginning. Some seniors may feel that they have become redundant, unimportant, because there now seem to be no goals to achieve, no sense of urgency. Others may perceive that they have come to a standstill, marking time.

However, new goals can be set, for there are now new things to achieve. The senior has before him the opportunity to put accumulated knowledge to work in helping his fellowmen, assisting those who may never have felt his self-assurance, those who are younger and who may welcome his assistance.

Someone observed that "the past is a foreign country — they did things differently there." A senior has the opportunity to keep abreast of the times, to interest himself in recent developments, to acquire pursuits which absorb the interest. Indeed, some people have realized in their senior years that they have found their right place in life, which they have been searching for throughout the decades preceding it.

Enthusiasm bridges many an obstacle. Seniors will soon discover that hobbies beget enthusiasm, a kind of contagion which infects the individual with exhilaration and a zest for living.

Every senior has at least one, some many, talents. Now he has the opportunity to practise a combination of the talents, pointing them toward the condition of life he wants.

It was Thomas Carlyle, English philosopher (1795-1881), who observed that "Change indeed is painful, yet needful; and if the memory has its force and worth, so also has hope."

Some seniors resist change, yet growth-producing change is a constant activity of life. Change comes from a Latin word meaning "to exchange." With each vicissitude comes the opportunity to make a choice. A senior can go through a change or he can choose to grow through a change.

An open door is before the senior. A choice confronts him, a challenge to his ingenuity, ability, determination. For to live is to grow — and everything that grows changes.



FRED W. CREED

What does it mean to be a senior? It means that the kid who could dance the Charleston all night, without getting tired, now gets winded playing chess. It means that when you remove your hat in an elevator, people think you're showing off that you still have hair. It means that when your grandkids find out how old you are, they want you to tell them of your experiences with knights, dinosaurs, and did the redskins ever raid the farm when you were young?

It means that when you mention the name Atwater Kent, they think you're talking about a new brand of yuppie automobile. It means that when you finally get to the door of the bus, it closes and it pulls away. It means that when you get your picture taken, it's usually an X-ray. It means standing with the fridge door open wondering if you're going to take something out, or put something in. It means that when your doctor tells you that you need more "Fresh Air," you should be listening to Bill and Alan at 6 in the morning on CBC.

Or it means 10 to 15 percent off the bill at your favourite bistro or cinema. It means total strangers asking for permission to smoke in your presence. It means a sense of contentment and pride when you look over the collection of kids and grandkids on Christmas Day. It means a phone call from the same kids at least once a week, to see if you're okay or need anything.

It means you now have the time and the inclination to write to old friends and acquaintances of yesteryear and relive many memorable moments of the halcyon days. It means going to the 50th anniversary of PS.98 and someone you haven't seen for half a century lies like a trooper and tells you that you haven't changed a bit.

It also means that as a Canadian, you live in one of the few countries in the world that makes we seniors feel wanted.



P.J. DUBELAAR

To be a senior means:

That I can stay in bed 'til I'm finished sleeping and not to be rudely torn from my slumbers by the shrill voice of the alarm clock.

That I finally have the time to read those books I always wanted to read and to do the jobs I had to postpone so often.

That I can go out for a little trip in the middle of the week, in the middle of the day, just like that, whenever I feel so inclined.

That I can watch late programs on TV without concern that I might be less than alert the next day, having stayed up so late.

That I will spoil my grandchildren, and not a worry in the world about the consequences.

That I don't have to go, hat in hand, to the boss to beg for an increase in salary; they now come automatically each year.

That the almost endless struggle on the ladder towards promotions in the workplace and the bitter frustrations experienced when somebody else gets the position, are finally over.

That there are a thousand and one reductions and privileges available for me in the marketplace.

That I can help out my children whenever there's a little job to be done for which they just don't have the time themselves.

That I don't have to save anymore for retirement: the time to spend is NOW.

That I now belong to an ever-increasing group of people with a voice to be reckoned with in the affairs of our country.

That I am pleasantly surprised and flattered every time somebody says: "Is that your age? Unbelievable! You look much younger!"

That everybody is just a little bit more considerate and thoughtful around you.

That I reached the top and it is glorious to be there!



MARION FERGUSON

Never in my wildest dreams did I ever think I'd be one of a company of ancients. I am 70 years old, and my view when I was much, much younger was, I expect, much the same as that of young people today. When I thought of 50-year-olds, I thought of them as ancient, past it all, and tottering on the edge. With great assurance, I thought it would never happen to me. Of course, I didn't think of the only alternative.

I accept gladly the goodies that come from the government in the plain brown wrapper each month. I'm not a moocher, but I am pleased the powers that be decided that after a certain birthday we are considered worthy citizens, and the fact that both sides of my family have paid taxes and been law-abiding citizens of Canada for over a hundred years makes me not averse to using what I get.

I live in a small apartment building with people from 60 to 80-plus years of age. I find them all congenial, and we respect each other's need for privacy. We get together frequently for cards in winter and shuffleboard in summer. I find shuffleboard fills the void left when I had to give up curling two years ago due to a slipped disc.

Our art group gets together every week. We are all do-it-yourselfers, and got together about 17 years ago for the fun of it, and it has been fun. In summer we get together just once in a while, as everyone is busy.

I realize I am indeed fortunate that I'm in reasonably good health. Aging is a matter of health and interests, not birthdays. God willing, I'll live 'til I'm *old* old.

I'm fortunate that my family lives close by, and I see them often. I now have my first wee grandson; he's 18 months old and such a joy.

Of course, there is the other side of the coin. I live alone now, and after five years I am afraid I'll never, never get used to coming in and

finding no one to say, "How did it go?" or "Did you win?", depending on what I happened to have been doing.

Even now I find myself thinking, "I must remember to tell Dunc this or that," and then I realize once again he's no longer there.

No one to enjoy television with or talk over a book or newspaper item we've read. I'm sure most people who live alone know exactly what I mean.

There are weeks that hurry by and days that seem to last a month. There are up days and down days, and days when I creak more than usual. But if I remember way back when, it's always been like that. More or less. That's life. I'm 70 years old.



MARY G. FITKOWSKI

The bell on the cash register rang as the drawer slid open. "That's four sixty-eight — I mean six four — NO! That's four eighty-six, please." The young clerk (young to me, at least half my age) grinned at me. She continued: "I'm confused this morning. I hope it's not an omen for the rest of the day."

She handed me my change and I smiled back.

"Just wait 'till you're my age," I said.

"M-m-m," she acknowledged. "What will I be by that time if I'm mixed up already?"

"That's what I mean," I answered. "Things don't get any better."

Outside the store, walking to my car, I pondered that last remark. That was a lie, I thought. Some things do get better.

For instance, no alarm clock forces one to work on a cold, wintry morning. Stepping out into blowing snow, brushing off the car, sweeping the drive — in the dark — is just a memory.

Spare time gets better. There is more of it. More time to do the things one likes; time to read; time for crafts; time for music; time to cross oceans; time to walk; time to just sit and any time to eat.

Retirement pensions appear regularly. One can budget the lesser amounts and forget job security, working overtime, demotions, promotions, transfers

By the time the key was in the ignition I had decided anew that old age had a lot going for it. I turned the key. The motor sputtered and died. Two more attempts and the coughing and growling settled into a hesitant grumbling.

Like this car, I thought, pulling out into the traffic — like this car we do wear out. That is what doesn't get any better. Our joints stiffen. We start more slowly. Nothing works quite as well as it used to. Unlike an old car, we cannot turn ourselves in for a new model.

That's not quite true, either, I mused. Eventually we do leave this old body for a new life.

Placid and content, I drove into the driveway. When I reached the kitchen I decided the groceries could decorate the kitchen table for a while. I extracted the newly purchased crossword puzzle magazine from between the cereal box and a package of tea.

Settled comfortably in the old rocking chair in front of the sunny window, I began to solve the first puzzle.

Lunch could wait.



ANNE FRANCIS

Being a senior gives us new freedom, new obligations and new responsibilities. Over the long years we have gained inner strength and wisdom through experience. We have known grief and happiness, the frustrations and satisfactions of the workplace or running a home, anxiety and relief, bitterly disappointing and also forever-loving relationships. From experience we have begun to understand what is important in life and so we have much to give to ourselves as well as to others, and have an obligation to give.

Having more leisure after retirement, we can read the books we always wanted to read. We can take university or other courses to study subjects we want to understand for our own satisfaction and growth. We can find time to delight in the beauty of our country, the stimulation of art and the relaxation of music. If we are lucky we can travel and see new places we long to see. If we are healthy and have special training we can launch out on a new career of our choice. We can give volunteer service in many ways so that we are useful, wanted and fulfilled.

Our new freedom has given us an obligation as citizens to speak out courageously against injustice, the needless suffering and the poverty of many people in our society. We have no job to hold onto, no spouse to help support, no small children to protect and so we need not be silenced by fear of insecurity. Being a senior means that we have a responsibility to help the young since we have been young and can remember the worries and doubts involved in growing up. We must help the middle-aged since we have known the self-questioning and readjustments that assail us before we reach maturity. At all times we must try to comfort the lonely old, the ill and the deprived, because for our own sake we must use our wisdom. By comforting we will be comforted.

There are many important things for us to learn, now that we are seniors, that only we ourselves can teach us. We need to acquire the serenity to accept “the ills that flesh is heir to” and not allow them to rule us, but instead be grateful that science has now made it easier for us to bear them than it was for others in the past.

We need to forgive ourselves for the things we wish we had not done and to forgive others who have wounded us so that we are not destroyed by resentments. We need to rejoice in our family and friends and be grateful for those we have loved and who loved us and who are now forever absent from us here. We must learn to remember happy days and forget the hours of sadness.

By carrying out our obligation to give and forgive and be grateful we are learning the meaning of love, and by doing that we are enriching the time left to us and preparing ourselves for the journey we must take we know not when.



ROSIE GAMBLE

To be a senior citizen means you have reached an age when you can reminisce on all the events of your life. The wonderful things, the happy things — and yes the unhappy things. But the peace and joy you have now overshadow any thought of troubled times. You see your grown-up children, married with children of their own. You remember when you held your first grandchild in your arms, and said to yourself, “This is a part of me.” And the thrill when you heard that first lisped “Nana.”

You remember when you sat in the front pew, battling with sadness and happiness as each one said “I do.” The grandchildren are growing up, so there are more weddings to come.

We think back over the years and realize how good life has been. When some of our children call and say “How are you? Are you all right? Do you need anything?”, you know the meaning of true love. Yes, somebody cares. That means so much to older people.

Now, we have the thing we always wanted — time. Time to sit and think of days gone by. When children were small and needed us every day. Time to remember school days and friends, both theirs and ours. Time to browse around the stores instead of rushing to buy the things we needed for the next day’s meal, items for the children.

We are not idle. We are busy doing things we never had time for before. Ladies knit and sew and try out exotic recipes that are too fancy for everyday meals. The men follow up on hobbies they always wanted to work at. We find a lot to keep us occupied, and we can now attend social events we never had time for before.

Yes, time has slowed us down. We cannot dance, run and hop around the way we used to. But we are active in many ways. Our fingers make up for our feet. Our minds are bursting with the

knowledge we have stored by the reading we have done. The printed page has been a revelation in describing things inactive people can do. We accomplish a lot from what we read.

What does it mean to be a senior? It means in another 65 years you could not count up the wonderful, beautiful, happy things that have been in your life. There are two heavens — one here and one beyond.



MARGUERITE KENNEDY GARRICK

For me, reaching my 65th birthday was a time to pause and take stock.

I had always intended to write a journal for my daughter when she was born, telling her her background, of loving her, wanting her. Somehow with growing sons, a house in the country, and my work, I hadn't found time.

Before I knew it my babies were teenagers and we were living in Panama, Guatemala, Santo Domingo — my husband a consultant with United Nations.

Then schools in England, Trent University, and I was a grandmother.

So when I became a senior, with teenage granddaughters clamouring, browsing through old albums — “Wow! Look at that handsome naval officer! Who is that beautiful girl? You were so young! Is that his ship? Who are those gorgeous hunks?” — I decided to write my journal for them.

Remembering was like discovering a hidden box of love letters, full of perfume from long-ago bouquets, ghost voices murmuring of love, echoes of aching farewells — “Je reviens.”

I had just turned 17 that September in 1939 when war was declared — a young girl desperately in love.

The boys, so sweet and brave, eager to capture life while they still had a chance, leaving. Each in his heart believing he would survive the forces tearing our lives to shreds — come home again — be young again — pick up the threads.

Of course it was not to be.

My darling David, in practice only a few months, after years of

preparation, in convoy duty on the North Atlantic, pursued by the fiends of hell unleashed, flaunting swastikas.

In Europe, rising smoke from death camps drifted, a silent scream of reproach to heaven, as the burgeoning Nazi war machine fattened on innocent victims. Then the treachery of Pearl Harbour, Malaysia, Hongkong and Singapore.

At last the proud grey ships returned to harbours garlanded with lights after six long years of darkness.

We heard the plaintive wail of a lone piper skirling a lament for the dead, searing the soul with anguish.

Man's inhumanity to man.

I wrote it all down with many bitter tears.

We are the survivors, we seniors.

If we don't speak of it, who will? I wanted my girls to know.



H. GIBSON-HALL

Old timers! That's us and we are proud of it! Win, lose or draw we are the ones who have met life as it is and survived. We have lived through our youthful inexperience, much useless advice, many disproven theories and have attained real maturity — so they call us old timers!

Look up at us! Time is on our side. Time is the acid test for most of man's projects. We have had the time and we know how it can erode the ideas, dreams, ideals, good intentions and great inventions.

Look up at us! Experience is on our side. We have it in abundance. The poor blighters at age 25, 35 or even 45 still have a very important decision to make — to try their experiments or to use our experiences.

Look up at us! We know the satisfaction of a finished job, well and faithfully done. No matter the magnitude of the work, licking stamps or building a computer, the fact that we completed it is the ultimate test.

Look up at us! We know the value of patience. "Make haste slowly," we say, and you laugh at us. But we have seen the plodding tortoise sometimes arrive before the swift-running hare.

Look up at us! We know the virtue of tolerance. We have learned that sometimes the other fellow is right and that we are wrong. We have accepted the fact that there are degrees of right and of wrong — call it the middle ground.

Look up at us! We know greed for the ugly thing that it is — a dangerous malignancy. When possessions or power become a sole aim in life, then a soul is maimed for life.

Look up at us! Lifelong friendships are ours to enjoy. What can be better than to have old friends to gossip with about our school pranks, adolescent escapades, past family crises and grandchildren? God bless them!

Look up at us! Our memories may be short but they are rich in love, in understanding, in words and deeds and in breadth and depth.

Ah yes, old timer, the view is magnificent from up here!



RITA MARGARET GREENOUGH

To live fully, and with joy, after 65, takes some doing. It is, as life has always been, a matter of grand survival. But now, I must consciously face the fact of survival — the last stage of it, and on insecure footing, on what-ifs.

What if I'm sick? My dear life partner dies? I'm alone? I have to move from the home I love? There isn't enough money? My friends die, too? When it seems my children haven't much time for me? How shall I survive these hurting, though sometimes imagined, whisperings in my soul?

Well, I knew without really thinking about it that I would survive youth, love, marriage, children — even the trauma of being 30, 40, 50 years old. But 65? These were some of my fearful thoughts as I faced “survival” at 63, after the death of my husband.

One thing gave me no problem. I knew the house had to go, or I would live in memory lane for the rest of my life. I found an apartment in my own locality, where stores and buses were familiar to me and it wasn't such a drastic change, and soon the apartment came to be home.

Then I remembered that my husband and I had planned to take some courses at Carleton University when he retired, so why don't I? With much fear and trembling (and a son who knew the university to show me the ropes), I started nine years ago to aim for an educated opinion on things that mattered, interested or concerned me: religion, philosophy and people; how people are, and why?

Now, at 74, I call these my survival “tools”: Learning is number one, some volunteer work, giving special time to special people. I enjoy these vintage years, knowing I chose the way, one day at a time. It's different, mostly unpredictable, but grandly challenging, as is all of living.



RALPH HENDRA

Sometimes doing a little reminiscing with a couple of old Buds, we talk about the good old days back on the old farm where we grew up. Some folks called it hard times in the early '30s, when to us it was hard to make a dollar. In the winter you made a buck by cutting a pile of wood — good pay as it warmed you twice. In the summertime you could follow a threshing machine. After toiling day by day, going down the deep valley and climbing high mountains, you could take a break by stopping for a cool drink of water.

For our social life, we could go to a ball game in the local park, or take a sweet young one to a schoolhouse dance for 25 cents (ladies brought the lunch). If you talked nice around home you might get the family car. You could get four gallons of gas for one dollar and see a Gene Autry or Clark Gable and Carol Lombard show. In the summertime you could go to an open dance at the lake.

Good times go fast and and better times come and you and that sweet one become one. Soon you are looking for those little bundles from heaven. The good old days continue on and we watch those little bundles grow into adulthood, and soon they were looking for little bundles themselves.

The good ole days had their ups and downs. But the good times were in the majority. Now though, enjoying life year by year with lots of hard work, and without giving it a second thought, the first thing we know, graduation day has come upon us. On that day, we receive a diploma becoming a senior citizen — which has meant everything to me. Having been a working man, it is now a big treat to have lunch with my good wife. Instead of the good ole days, it is these good days of getting old. To me it means we have the time to do a lot of things that we did not have the time to do before.

There is time for hobbies. I think everyone should have a hobby. I enjoy having the greatest fellowship one could want by joining a seniors' club. Playing games, doing craft work or having an afternoon

singalong in a local coffee shop with a group of seniors makes for a great time. Or going on a bus trip for a few days with the seniors where the topic of discussion often is, "I don't know how I found the time to go to work."

No, we can't buy gas at four gallons for a dollar, or find a 25-cent movie, but our good government sends us a cheque each month which does enable us to enjoy all these things in life that our forefathers did not have.

I am thankful every day, that the Good Lord has given us the right to be a senior citizen. I have been a senior for six years and I think the one who called them the Golden Years named it well

At my retirement party, I was presented with a plaque with the following poem on it which sums up my feelings on being a senior citizen:

RETIREMENT

*Fleeting moments of time have passed,
The hardest work is o'er
It's time to rest and share your life
With those you laboured for.*



RUTH HORAN

To be a senior is to be a survivor. Just to acquire the title “senior” is to have lived through 65 or more years of hardship, worry, fear and pain. All this roundly mixed with confusion and bewilderment, and luckily, often liberally sprinkled with laughter, joy and pride. Pride in our children and in our other accomplishments.

When, finally, retirement day comes along, we experience that beautiful feeling of relief that comes with the realization that we have emerged from the great struggle more or less intact. We have actually survived! Life threw all it had at us and we took it in our stride. We may have staggered at times, just a bit, but we took it and even threw some back on occasion. Best of all, we laughed — we laughed out loud. Laughter after all is the best medicine.

Autumn is harvest time, and we who are in the autumn of our lives can now reap what we have sown. It is our harvest time. We worked hard in our younger years, raised our children and gave them the best life and education we could afford. We managed to lay aside a little money for our declining years, and now, at last, we have the time and the means to sit back, relax and enjoy life, however much is left of it.

Our physical needs are generously supplemented by the Old Age Security pension, our medical requirements are provided by an excellent government health plan, many companies have good pension plans and as well there is the Canada Pension Plan. Canadian seniors are well cared for and should be thoroughly appreciative. We are. There are little perks and discounts in the marketplace especially for seniors, if we but look for them.

Like many seniors, we are far from wealthy. However, we have all we really need. We have our own home, a car, good food, fine clothes, freedom to travel where and when we please. What more could anyone ask or want?

Yes, this is the harvest time for us, and the plums on our tree of life are ripe, plump and sweet!



INA M. HUNT

What does it mean to be a senior? Let me count the ways
 Gratitude: For my fine family of four sons, innumerable grandchildren and great grandchildren, my good health, my wonderful friends, my solicitous neighbours, my many benefits, health and social, from a generous and concerned government.

Pride: For my good luck to be a resident of Canada, to have been born here, and to have grown old in the best country in the world, and to have seen it all from coast to coast and north to the Arctic.

Compassion: For the many seniors who are not as fortunate as some. My heart aches when I realize some kindred spirit is in a hot, lonely room on a sultry summer evening. Or those in nursing homes, never to leave their beds or chairs, forgotten by their families and friends.

Memories: Sad ones, glad ones. As a child, reading the paper with my mother, which consisted mainly of deaths from the flu epidemic and casualties from the First World War.

The '20s, flappers, flivvers, fun and games. Then the Depression, no work, no money and the humiliation of having to accept help.

The Second World War, work again, prosperity and rationing.

The end of the war and rationing, and joy of joys, being able to buy nylon stockings.

Request: For a quick and painless death and that my family always remain friends and live a long and fruitful life.



MARGARET E. JOHNSON

Old Jeanie is a senior-senior. I doubt if she can find her birth certificate, but can produce affidavits from many reliable persons as to her age. She has been a resident of Ontario all her life. She never learned to type so asked me to send this.

She says one big bonus in growing older is that not so much is expected of her. Now she feels no need to compete for attention or strive for success. Her figure is no longer trim and her hair is rather thin and “scraggly” but that is no cause for concern.

When she was young she did enjoy the gentlemen and in “doing what comes naturally” and has had several “husbands.” In her fruitful years there was no such “escape” as abortion and birth control was abstinence (not easy at all). The result, of course, has been many children. (I wonder sometimes if she knows how many?)

She was always happy in being a mother — lavished affection on the kids when they were small and cared for them well — always kept them clean and well-fed. But once they had grown big enough to learn to be independent, she encouraged them to get out on their own. She never was one for Mother’s Day sentiments and that sort of thing. She finds it more fun to be a grandmother with no responsibility if the children are bad or good.

She never learned to drive a car and hates buses but used to walk everywhere, day and night. Now she has arthritis and other aches and finds this very limiting, but never grumbles. She finds the stairs most difficult and was relieved when her family fixed a little “potty” discreetly hidden in the back kitchen, so she no longer needs to go “out back” when nature calls.

Most of her teeth are gone now so her food has to be soft, but she still enjoys eating. She likes chicken and fish (which the doctors say are good for one) and she has porridge (with cream please!) for break-

fast. She never drank tea or coffee, just water and milk, with occasionally a drop of brandy — “for medicinal purposes” you understand. Her digestion is now not so good and she is embarrassed if she experiences “little explosions” in company.

She never looks back to reminisce what might have been, nor does she plan for the future. “Sufficient unto the day” is the sunshine or rain or whatever comes. She doesn’t mind hot weather and when it gets cold she can find warmth by the fire. The only weather that ever upsets her is a thunderstorm — this gives her a headache.

She knows she has been lucky in housing, although she was evicted from her first home in Toronto when it was torn down for an apartment. She was able to move in with a family in the suburbs and although they are no blood-relations, they have been her FAMILY ever since. She understands the feeling of homelessness and over the years has shared her accommodation with many “waifs and strays.” She would approve of Granny Flats.

Most of her time now is spent in dozing in her chair, not exactly snoring, but making a low comforted sound like a purr. She always enjoyed bird watching, not officially counting a “life list” but interested, and now she watches from the house. Her eyesight and hearing have failed but she enjoys life as it comes each day.

Not long after I wrote this Jeanie’s family found her permanently asleep in her chair. Our old Grannie Cat has gone to her reward with no fuss and no bother.

Humans can learn a thing or two from our “friends!”



TONY JONES

For those of us who are new seniors this is really the golden age. For the first time in our lives we command our own destiny. We have a freedom totally unknown to the less fortunate who still fight the daily rush-hour battles. No longer, for us, the struggle to “get ahead” nor the tyranny of deadlines, schedules and reports.

In our world there are no lay-offs, no redundancies and no over-time. We have entered a world in which we do things because we wish to do them and not because we must. It is not an easy transition but when we have made it the rewards are unbelievable.

Many of us cannot break the habits of a lifetime. For these people there is still the possibility of volunteer or, at times, even paid employment. Their skills and their devotion to duty, tempered and honed in long years of service, are still needed in this world.

For others there is the freedom to travel at any time of the year. It is strange to recall that there was once a time when our wanderings had to be limited to a couple of weeks in the summer. Free at last!

Being a senior means that we have time. Time to study, to create, to explore new hobbies or to wallow in the greater enjoyment of old ones. There are poems to be written and music to be spun. Now we have the time to achieve all those dreams we had to put off during our working life.

We even have the time to notice little pleasures we overlooked during those frenetic years of toil. Only now can we appreciate the real beauty of butterflies, sunlight on snowbanks and dewdrops on roses. We have found a whole new and glorious world.

Being a senior means that we carry with us a wealth of sad and happy memories. They shaped our lives and made us what we are. They are reminders of the contributions we made in making this land a little better than we found it.

We may not see quite as well as we once did and our steps are a little slower. Nevertheless looking back on it all we cannot be too displeased with our efforts.



BEN KAMINKER

I am strolling through the park on a glorious October day. It's great to be alive. The colours are at their best. Last year at this time, I took snapshots and turned them into watercolours during the winter. They made wonderful gifts for the kids. Kids — my oldest son is 50, my granddaughter will be Bat-Mitzvah in a couple of weeks. They are expecting me to say a few words. If I start on that talk now, can I still write something for the creative writing class on Friday? I wouldn't miss that class for the world.

Let's see. Tuesdays and Thursdays are my days at Baycrest. My oldest sister is there, confined to bed. Does she recognize me? It's hard to tell. I can never repay her for what she did for me. She took charge of my household when Freda of blessed memory died, 18 years ago now. How time flies. I sit beside my sister's bed, feeling sad, frustrated, baffled.

Downstairs the arts and crafts class for the handicapped will have started. They are glad to see me. My mood changes. I feel needed, uplifted. Even as I, they too have discovered that the secret to true happiness lies in losing oneself in creative work, in helping others, in doing things for the thing itself, rather than for praise or pay. Not that praise or pay is scorned, for we are human and these are delightful rewards, but if not proffered, all well and good, too.

I'm walking more briskly now. Last time I had my chest X-rayed, Dr. Patterson who removed the lobe of one of my lungs two years ago asked me:

"You keep pretty active?"

"I try."

"Well, these pictures are beautiful."

I can see no beauty in X-ray pictures, but will gladly take his word for it.

Wednesday, I'm due for another X-ray.

Saturday, I attend services in the morning and play chess with a friend in the afternoon. Great game that, keeps the mind alert.

I'll do what writing I can in the evening.

I have done the measured mile in 17 minutes — not bad, considering the lung surgery. I have reached my favourite bench, and open carefully the little book I have been carrying, an old friend, an anthology. The covers are falling apart again. On the flyleaf, there is an inscription in my own handwriting and the date, June, 1933. Memories.

What a magic thing is a book. Through it, I can commune with the loftiest spirits, past and present. I open it at random and read an extract from Charles Lamb:

"I care not to be carried with the tide that smoothly bears human life to eternity. I am in love with the green earth." So am I.

It is late. Molly will be waiting for me. The grandchildren are coming over, hers and mine, ours.

It's great to be alive.



ROLAND J. LETOURNEAU

To be a senior means you have completed the longest apprenticeship known to man. Trades or professional people can be accredited in four to ten years. Seniors require 65 years to complete their "time."

There are no special requirements for becoming a senior other than time. It requires no special education, no special skills and no special knowledge. There are no special tools to use, no special rules. Only time.

There are no diplomas or certificates given to seniors. There are no graduation classes or commencement exercises. There are no class reunions, no prom dances. You merely go to sleep the night prior to your 65th birthday and *voilà!* — you wake up the next morning a senior. You have completed your "time."

There are advantages to being a senior. But it is left to you to take advantage of all or just some of them. There are pensions, discounts in entertainment and most travel, a special newsletter, even a Senior Citizens' Week. A Special Time.

So it would appear that being a senior is tied closely to time. The time it takes to become a senior and the time you have left. It's a time in your life.

A time to resolve that you will enjoy life as fully as possible despite any old handicaps or new illnesses. That you will maintain your dignity and independence for as long as you possibly can and then to be gracious in accepting help when it becomes a requisite.

A time to give of yourself and your energies, to share any skills or knowledge you may possess that may extend help to those who seek it.

A time to venture. To try a new hobby or perfect an old one. To pursue formal education. To travel your native country or a foreign

clime, or any of the many other pursuits you have not had time for in the past.

A time to enjoy the comfort of old friends, the charm of new acquaintances, the blessings of family, the bustle of the day and the soothing of the night. The beauty of nature and the solace of rest.

A time to tell your family and friends that you love them, that you appreciate their worries and concerns for your welfare. That you know they are there if you need them and that you in return are there to support them should the need arise.

A time for Faith, Hope and Charity. Faith that mankind will achieve world peace. Hope that future generations will strive toward this achievement and Charity towards those who would mistakenly delay it.

A time in your life that you can turn into the time of your life. A time to resolve, to give, to venture, to enjoy, and a time to tell what it means to be a senior.



GORDON J. LINDSEY

What becoming a senior means to me can be summed up in one word — freedom. Not since those long-ago days in the cradle have I been as free. No longer do I have anyone giving me orders, directing most of my activities — parents, teachers, advisors, bosses, saying “Do this,” “Don’t do that,” “This is best for you,” “That is wrong.”

Now I set my own objectives, establish my own timetables, without directives from anyone. Of course I still get suggestions from others but I am completely free to ignore such advice, and usually do.

Now that I am a senior I am no longer concerned or affected by peer pressure. I can now ignore the subtle push to conform, that said I must play properly in the schoolyard, dress properly as a teenager, be a team player at work, be a model citizen in the community. I am no longer afraid to be different. For seniors even a few eccentricities are condoned.

Much of my new freedom comes from the release from responsibility for my children. I no longer must provide for them and all the concerns of those child-rearing years are past. They are now adults and living their own lives independent of me.

I am also free from those money worries that were with me for nearly 50 years. I never did bounce a cheque or miss a mortgage payment, but my income never quite seemed to match my outgo. I just never stopped worrying about the condition of my bank balance. Now, as a senior, my income is considerably less than it was before retirement, but my outgo is even more reduced. I now have control over most of what I spend. The bank manager, the mortgage company and the finance company are at long last satisfied. I have learned to live happily with what I have.

Becoming a senior means that life goals such as career success,

honours, recognition and awards have changed. It is accepted that such goals and incentives are essential but I have found as a senior that they are no longer needed in the same way. I no longer need a carrot dangled in front of me. I have exchanged that need to succeed for a simpler way of life of my own choosing. I am now free to pursue personal interests that have no specific goals other than to give me pleasure.

But I must be careful that I do not look on these new-found freedoms as rewards or gifts which relieve me of all responsibilities. One of my new freedoms can be very tempting but must be resisted — that is the freedom to do nothing. I cannot forget that I am still a part of a community of family and friends.

Life, of course, is a series of compromises, or trade-offs as we called them in the business world. For all those freedoms I have gained there is one at least that I have lost. I have lost the freedom of youthful assurance that I would live forever.

But I am enjoying my “seniority” too much to let one lost freedom bother me.



GREGOR S. LUND

A few years ago on a visit with my brother who lives in Norway Valley, Wisconsin, our place of birth, I was shocked into reality. After reviewing those of our old valley neighbors who had passed on, Harold said: "Greg, there is now no one ahead of us — we're next."

Wow! This hit me like a pail of cold water! Could it be possible that our age had crept up on us so silently as to make us the most senior in the valley? Shortly afterwards, our younger brother died very suddenly. Harold had indeed pointed out an unthought-of fact. Our brother had only been retired two months, had not even collected his first retirement cheque. A fresh senior removed from life.

I had never considered myself as a senior. My health is close to perfect: a strong body, active mind. I felt alert and sharp — better in fact than when a quarter-century younger. Surely I should feel old. Yet, I'm satisfied. What is wrong with me?

Acquaintances sell their homes where much of their lives have been spent, where their family grew up, and they settle for a condominium in warm climates. They leave friends that have been established and nurtured over decades, even remove the frequent contact with their children and families. I would miss our home of 30-plus years. I would hate to be moved into a strange surrounding and have to again make friends and establish new trusts in people. I guess I'm not normal because I'm happy in Oakville. My roots are deep in this community.

Every month as the government cheques arrive, I'm again reminded that I'm a senior. But I do not object to that. See no reason to worry over age spots nor increased waistline. I do not feel different, yet I feel guilty because I guess I should.

We live in a country that helps seniors to be more comfortable than

anywhere I know. The seniors' discount is an experience I always enjoy. I'm at a loss as to why this is not more prevalent in Canada. This courtesy makes me feel great — sort of a vote of respect for giving that merchant your money for a service. It's a reverse gratuity that is much appreciated by me. We are privileged to have the best medical care and the pleasure of the druggist saying "It's covered by OHIP."

Being a senior permits me to listen to younger people and their dreams. It also seems to give me a licence to be philosophic without penalty.

Each day makes me ever more aware of the beauty of another sunrise or sunset, the loveliness of fresh-fallen snow, the glorious greens of spring and the brilliant autumn colours, the annual blooming of flowers. Time goes so fast, yet I seem to have more time to appreciate God and all He has provided.

A major reason for my happy attitude and my satisfaction with my life is the contribution made by my wife of over 41 years. In that span of togetherness we have never had a serious disagreement. Her support has moved me into and kept me in a sphere of contentment. It is indeed GREAT to be an Ontario senior!



IRENE MARCHAND

To be a senior citizen means to have the freedom to follow our own individual road to happiness and contentment. This road has many branches. They may lead to further study, to remunerative employment, to volunteer work, to arts and crafts, to gardening, to various forms of recreation and to travel. Now, at last, we have the time and opportunity to do the things for which we so long yearned.

It is a time for thought, for prayer, and for participation in community affairs. It is a time for quilting, needlepointing, painting, reading and assuming responsible positions in interesting organizations. It is a time to enjoy our leisure, our grandchildren, our family and our friends. Now the skies are bluer, the grass seems greener, the wonders and beauties of nature are more apparent and more deeply appreciated. Life is restful. Life is exciting. Life becomes infinitely more precious as the hours, the days, the weeks, the months and the years slip so quickly away.

This is no time to dwell upon frustrations of the present or on errors of the past. Today we face our problems with serenity, with maturity and with a strength of character which we have developed during the past 65 or more years.

Today's seniors treasure a wealth of memories. We recall a simple way of life when we walked a mile or two each day to "The Little Red Schoolhouse"; when each Sunday, with our parents, we drove seven or more miles to our church; when on Christmas morning we all bundled up, in the horse-drawn sleigh, to spend the day with grandparents, uncles and cousins.

We remember Armistice Day and the excitement felt when the First World War was finally ended; our first "talking machine" when we listened to the songs of Sir Harry Lauder; our first radio for which

the battery always needed recharging; the planting of the first tree in the provincial reforestation program; Grandma sitting in front of the kitchen stove rocking and singing when her old-age pension cheque of 20 dollars arrived; and, of course, that second-hand Model T Ford, our very first car. Today we may forget who dealt the last hand in a euchre game, but our memories never seem to fade.

However, the present years in our lives are even more wonderful than the past. We are now citizens of the world. Kings, queens and people from all walks of life visit us daily in our own homes. We can fly anywhere in the world in a matter of hours. At the turn of a dial we can talk to people in far-away lands. We have seen men walk on the moon. The Olympic flame has come to Canada. We are living longer. Our health is better. We are more active. Our federal and provincial governments are generous in providing us with many special services as well as some financial security. In our gratitude we can only say:

Lord, our thanks we give this day

For family, home and friends;

And lift our thoughts in prayer to You

From whom all good descends.



ELIZABETH J. MATHIEU

Seniors are highly individual people, no more alike in old age than in their earlier years. I cannot generalize about being a senior. But I can speak of myself, a 77-year-old woman, and how life is for me, a very recent widow after a 55-year marriage.

I see many people who look as old as I am, in the “over-65” group for sure, and many of them are healthy-looking, mobile and alert. Others are broken, feeble, or handicapped in some way. I think my own outward appearance has worsened more than my inward feeling of well-being. I have few aches and pains, and those which I have may be stress-related. Certainly everyone who lives this long has had some trying experiences.

My life has been more happy than sad, much more good than bad. Still, for the past several years, I learned about the troubles of aging as my strong and vigorous husband gradually became weaker and more ill. When he was young, I thought he was like a great oak tree and that nothing could ever bring him down. Yet he is gone, and I, never particularly strong or robust, remain well and active and learning to manage on my own.

I drive my car, baby-sit grandchildren, and make plans to travel and visit around the country sometime soon. I spend a great deal of time just being thankful for many things younger people may take for granted. I am thankful to still have so many people to love and share my life—children, sisters and their families, many other relatives and good friends, and the many nice people around this city just making it cheerful to be here.

I am thankful to have been well-born, of good and caring parents who also had good and caring parents, and to pass that relationship on to my children so that they can do the same.

It is a great bonus in life to have a good education, and to be able

to keep on learning something every day, to appreciate this wonderful world as it has been given to us.

Only now, at last, do I have time to remember and enjoy the past — old photographs and letters bring all the good times back. I notice how seldom, if ever, we save photographs of the bad or sad times. All the old pictures seem to be of celebrations or important events in our lives.

There is a great deal more to like about being a senior. Just now, for instance, the sun is coming up on another beautiful day. I expect to start it by having a good cup of coffee, and then I will get on with what may become a long and interesting life.



JAMES MATTHEWS

What does it mean to be a senior? In a word — tranquillity. To know you've posted your score and now you can sit back and enjoy the 19th hole while those left out on the course are still knocking heads trying to beat it.

To enjoy the derisive laughter whenever you mention the "good old days" while laughing inwardly at the frenetic efforts of your critics as they struggle to keep pace with the "state-of-the art" new days.

To enjoy to the fullest the good of the present while showing only mild interest, with no participation, in the bad. To feel good about yourself, knowing that you've made it this far and the odds are in your favour for the rest of the trip. To be friends with your kids, if any, and to indulge your grandkids, if any the best of both worlds!

To be free to take a crack at whatever it was you wanted to do in the first place, without worrying about having to "make it."

To give advice based on experience when asked, or to remain non-committal when not.

To enjoy competition with your peers and particularly with pre-seniors of any age.

To learn, at long last, that love can exist without passion. To realize that all seniors are prematurely grey. Mine's hereditary, of course, runs in the family I got mine from my kids!

To realize, a little smugly perhaps, that in our day parents had too many kids whereas today kids have too many parents! To recall with a whimsical smile that one can always drop into a motel for immoral memories.

To seriously consider starting a second family on the rationalization that one could take over the 2 a.m. feeding. After all, you have to get up anyway!

To remember the time when one didn't need a program to tell the

crooks from their victims.

When you catch yourself wondering why we have so many bleeding hearts and thinking maybe it's due to the increasing number of heart transplants.

When you recall your parents telling you that no one ever got into trouble for minding his own business and you think it just might apply to countries, too.

Remembering when you didn't have to take out a second mortgage in order to take your wife out for a full-course meal.

When you turn first to the obituaries rather than the sports section, not with sympathy for those of your friends who may have gone but with morbid curiosity to see if you are the only one left!

But most important of all, being a senior is being an elder statesman, a time for prideful retrospect, a time to enjoy completely.



WINNIFRED MATTHEWS

Throughout the stages of my life, I always envied the age group just ahead of my own. As a child, I couldn't wait to be a teenager, then a sweet 21, then married and a mother. As a mother of three teenagers, I envied the calm, cool and confident career woman of about age 45, so I re-entered the workforce. Age 45 came and went and never did I recognize the confidence I so aspired after.

I stopped short of aspiring to be a senior citizen. It was some sort of dirty word to me at that time. I realize I must have anticipated it as I took a course on "Aging Gracefully and Remaining Active and Useful," or something like that. I fought every step of the way to remain younger by dyeing my hair, artful use of makeup and watching my figure. I was at the time competing in the business world with women 30 years my junior.

As a child, I was taught to respect my elders. This I tried to do all my life until one day not so long ago. In the drugstore, I stepped back to let two white-haired ladies go ahead of me. I had a moment to stop and look at the ladies. The discovery I made that day will change the rest of my life. Those two sweet old ladies were probably younger than I was! I was most upset.

Where did this put me—in the seniors' group? But I didn't feel old, feeble or weak. I really didn't feel any different. I had a lot of living to do.

About this time, my husband was laid off from his job and couldn't find another one because of his age. We talked things over and decided that we would rather wear out than rust out, so we retired to the country. I have never regretted leaving the hustle-bustle of the business world behind. We have worked hard on our new home but have enjoyed every minute of it. This is a labour of love. We do what we want when we feel like it and take a day off when we feel like it.

This being retired isn't too hard to take. There certainly isn't much time to worry about aches and pains.

What does it mean to be a senior?

To me, it has come to mean a time to reflect on the good things in life, a time to renew my faith in God, a time to enjoy neighbours and friends, plus having the time to enjoy the most precious dividend life can give — grandchildren.

This is a time when it is most important to take good care of one's health — eat well, but less, take medications as prescribed, and above all exercise every day.

There doesn't seem to be enough time to do all the things I saved to do when I retired. I am concerned, however, for my fellow seniors who are not as healthy and able as myself, and I intend to volunteer my help when the chores slow down a bit.

The most difficult thing about this stage of life, I find, is keeping my mouth shut and not sounding like a know-it-all to my adult children. So many times I have felt I could have saved them a little frustration, time or money if they would only listen to me. I realize they must experience life's ups and downs in their own way, not mine. They'll never grow otherwise.

Government pensions, plus stores giving discounts to seniors, make life a little easier financially. I intend to enjoy this stage of life. It's all I've got. As a matter of fact, I don't know why I fought so hard against becoming a senior citizen.



AGNES G. METCALF

Seniorhood appears to be a time to think back and reminisce and to look ahead in anticipation and wonder. We heard much about the Golden Years while growing up. Through childhood, the carefree years of a teenager and the dating years of our 20s, we felt we had the world by the tail. We knew what was the matter with the world, and how to make it right.

At age 30, things took on a different shape. The world was still not perfect, but it did not seem to be as bad as when we were 20. A closer look at the shape the world was in seemed to prove that our forefathers had done a better job in shaping the future than we had given them credit for. We were ready to settle down and start a family with great enthusiasm.

Forty came along as sure as night follows day. The politics of the world took on a different look, as we ourselves took on a different look. Our waistline altered and our hair became whiter and thinner. Some of our energy disappeared, but we were still trying hard to have an exciting night life. A new generation was growing up with our old ambition to change the world.

Fifty years arrived. We began to pick and choose the things we could do to fill our days. Going to work each day became a boring but necessary routine. We began to talk about retirement. Sitting at home with a good book held more appeal than a night on the town. News before bedtime became a must.

Suddenly 60 was here. Things were beginning to fall into the shape of destiny. Seniors took on a new face. Carpet bowling, pot-luck dinners, friendly card games and lively dart games all became

important. Out of this new social life, however, came the knowledge that we, as seniors, had a great deal to offer the world. Instead of looking back it became time to renew the energy that had slipped away. It was time to become more involved with the new activities in the world around us.

Age had given us the wisdom to see things in their proper perspective. Age had given us ambition and determination to do our share to help make a brighter future for mankind.

Now the 70s. With them came the calm serenity of a job well done with God's help. Graciousness and love now abound. We must surrender the reins of power and give in to the eventual supremacy of reason.

To me, all this is what being a senior really means.



EUNICE P. MILLS

As a senior I have been granted the privilege of TIME to reflect and to evaluate my life. I am in my 73rd year (my husband is in his 75th year).

Time

To pray and receive comfort, absolution, peace and security.

To be coddled by caring and affection of friends and relations. The teenager inside me shrieks, "I can do that myself. I don't need help!", but the today me appreciates the thought. I'm mildly amused to realize that I'm now a fragile antique.

To be still good friends with my husband since our marriage in 1939. We can talk and laugh together at bits of nonsense. Our home is a happy place.

To have seen, by my husband's estimate, 36 faraway, beautiful places and still be glad I'm a Canadian.

To be able to help other volunteers to care for those who are unable to care for themselves, and to play favourite tunes from the '20s and '30s for them on the piano.

To muck about with watercolour paints and to be happy with the questionable results.

To have health good enough to savour and appreciate these blessings.

To be glad to be alive and to be a senior!



ANTOINETTE MOISAN

Être une personne âgée, ça veut dire beaucoup. Premièrement, quand une personne est à l'âge d'or pour moi, c'est une réflexion continuelle sur ce qui s'est passé dans notre vie: enfance, jeunesse et âge mûr.

Dans tout cela, il y a des jours de joies et des jours de tristesse sous toutes ses formes; malgré tout, nous devons dire merci d'être encore autonome et capable de suivre certaines activités qui font chaud au coeur et sont bonnes pour le moral.

La personne âgée ne doit pas être triste et surtout ne pas dire: "vieillir c'est d'attendre d'être malade".

Il faut vivre au jour le jour; pour certaines personnes âgées cela peut être très difficile.

Si le Bon Dieu nous envoie des croix, il faut penser qu'il nous aime et qu'il est avec nous. Qu'est-ce que nous voulons de plus?

Sur la terre il n'y a pas de bonheur parfait; ce que l'on désire maintenant, un jour nous le verrons clairement.

Dieu sait tout. Si on a de la peine, ou de la joie. Il nous aime et nous connaît fidèlement.

Si nous nous sentons seul, Dieu a toujours dit: Je serai ton compagnon. Alors pourquoi pas lui parler comme on parle à un être cher. Il ne faut pas non plus oublier nos morts...

Nous savons qu'un jour nous aurons une fin; tout ce qui nous restera, c'est notre Dieu.



SUSAN MURPHY

At the very beginning to me it meant having the utmost satisfaction of slinging my husband's lunch pail into the garbage can, after a faithful 39 years of his working in a paper mill, and the wonderful relief of not having to jump out of bed with the sounding of the alarm clock each day.

It meant having the time to enjoy long walks together, to listen to the birds and observe the trees and wild animals of our area, to chat with folk we would meet along the way, and having extra time for our hobby of gardening.

To be able to attend social functions together was so meaningful and to take much, much more time over our meals.

For me it has meant having to experience the shattering blow of losing my loved partner some nine years ago, and going through the painfully slow process of learning to cope with living alone.

A whole new learning experience lay before me and with God's continuing help I may be "graduating" soon.

Now I manage to clean or replace the gas furnace filter as required, to tend to having adequate humidity in the house during the winter, and to drain the water tank completely when necessary.

I can now replace a washer to stop a dripping tap, and with the guidance of my 84-year-old neighbour I have learned how to use a caulking gun, prune trees, plant a garden, do paint jobs, hang wallpaper and do a multitude of interesting things.

I thank God for my good health and enjoy when possible the privilege of helping those who are less fortunate. It is nice to be able to visit the sick and shut-ins and to take time to read and speak with those who are blind.

When I travel alone I meet so many kind and helpful people, and I am smug enough to believe that this is so because I am a senior.

I have to admit it does take me longer to complete a task now, and I try so hard to remember where I left my glasses, and the name of a person to whom I had been introduced just five minutes earlier.

Being a senior means enjoying the arrival of the monthly Old-Age pension cheques, plus the property and purchase tax refunds at the end of each year, and all those other wonderful benefits extended to seniors by local banks and stores, and also the fun of belonging to a seniors' group.

It is so good to be able to enjoy with family and friends reflections on experiences throughout the years, and to laugh or cry over some of the drastic changes that have taken place in this period of time.

Let's face it, all in all being a senior IS SIMPLY TERRIFIC.



GLADYS NUGENT

What does it mean to be a senior? Sometimes it means leaving a spacious farmhouse where children played in the halls and on the wide verandah, and moving to smaller living quarters. You try to fit in the furniture. You couldn't part with that armchair, but it's empty now and you have a hollow feeling. You glance up at the mantel and see a wedding picture. There's a fresh-faced, broad-shouldered young man looking back at you. You smile and place a cushion in the old chair and move it to your favourite spot by the window.

Invariably getting older means saying goodbye to friends, friends who were such a part of you. You had shared so much. When things were not going well there was always someone to whom you could turn. After a cup of coffee and a heart-to-heart talk, you felt so much better. There was a bit of a silver lining in that dark cloud that had been hovering around you. But in another place and at another time you find a friend, and you feel there will be happy days ahead.

What does it mean to be a senior? Oh, it means that your steps are slower, and possibly you are no longer five feet five inches tall. Doors are heavier and stairs are steeper. When the keys to your mailbox give you problems, you blame it on the keys, not on your aging hands. But when you do get your mail and there is a letter from a special granddaughter you forget all about your aches and pains. She tells you about the young man she is planning to marry. She is so much in love. You understand. After all, 50 years have passed very quickly. You are so glad you lived your life to the full. However, there are other young friends, and there will be other precious moments to share.

In our young years life was so exciting and demanding. So much revolved around us. We were the kingpin in an important relationship. Friends and family depended on us. Then years pass and circum-

stances change. Suddenly we are on the sidelines. But we have time now, time to be more reflective, more perceptive. We are more attuned to the feelings of those around us. We are aware when a middle-aged daughter or son is facing problems. We know by the worried expression in their eyes. When they were young and things were not going well for them, we could pick them up and dust them off and convince them everything would work out. Now we are in the background but we can be there. We can stand by them and they will feel assured that their troubles will be righted.

As we slow down physically, we should become more understanding, more mellow. Issues that would have disturbed us in our earlier years are confronted with more tolerance. That is a bonus!

We older people know that being a senior means that we will be alone at times. An English poetess wrote:

No, I'm not lonely by myself.

My thoughts are company.



T. JACK NUNN

For me the aspect of being a senior which outweighs all of the others, good or bad, is not “having to.” I don’t have to get out of my bed earlier than I want to, to warm up the car, to fight the traffic, to compete in the daily race to find a parking space, to get to the office, to attend meetings scheduled for someone else’s convenience, to compete on the job for the next promotion. I have done all that. I have served my apprenticeship. I have paid my dues.

Theoretically, I can now choose to do nothing. What a wonderful feeling. To date, in the four years that we have been retired, my wife and I have been far too busy to do nothing. Maybe we will someday. Meanwhile the key sensation is that we could, if we chose.

Among my retired friends, freedom of choice seems to be THE essential quality most cherished and most exercised.

Seniors have other freedoms, too. We are free from worrying about the kids. They are through school, have jobs, married. We are free to play without having a guilty conscience. We are free to stroll in the park or sit in the shopping mall, to play bridge or bingo or poker, to make model trains or knit, to write letters to the editor and to the grandchildren, to swim, play golf, jog, go to school.

Of course, not every aspect of being a senior is rosy — but what stage in life is? No senior suffers more over liver spots than do his teenage offspring over acne and their own uncertain futures.

Our backs and knees get stiff. Our hearing may get worse. Mental arithmetic requires more effort. Eyes fail. Our memory is slow to respond to demands for quick recall. The spectre of cancer, arthritis, heart disease threatens. But we can learn to accommodate. We have done so all our lives!

The worst fate for a senior is to be unwanted. To be abandoned by relatives and friends, to be ignored by those who will not accept our

offer of our experience is painful. We have all heard the anguish of a mother or a grandmother who has lost touch with her children. We have all seen those lonely old vegetables planted in rocking chairs in nursing homes, waiting.

It continues to amaze me what strong, positive reactions can be obtained by a smile, a telephone call, a few minutes of personal attention. One of my chosen activities involves helping people trapped by age or circumstance. It is so rewarding. I am glad to be a senior.



HELEN OWEN

Being grown-up was one of my earliest ambitions, although at the time I did not realize it was something that was more or less inevitable. Nor did I realize that this much-desired status would also include a great deal of responsibility and a need to make personal decisions relative to the rest of my life.

Now, having reached seniority, I fully appreciate the benefits of this latest stage. Responsibilities have lessened, I have learned to live with the consequences of my decisions and am sustained by faith and the benison of experience. My attitudes are positive despite limitations. I tire more quickly, but can rest when I choose. Restricted agility means a more extended time schedule in order to pursue my various interests, and erstwhile priorities have had to be reassessed.

Perhaps the most satisfying daily aspect is that the stress and urgency required to tackle the working day is obliterated. The infinite pleasure of waking, stretching luxuriously and settling down again without a feeling of guilt is relaxation in the true sense of the word. I have the same freedom at the other end of the day. I can go to bed early, maybe read for a couple of hours, or stay up as late as I feel inclined.

During the course of a somewhat peripatetic existence friendship has flourished, and more importantly, been maintained. Correspondence has played a major role and recorded our mutual exchange of experiences of love, marriage, progeny, tragedy and triumphs. Long associations and reunions over the years have proved a constant source of stimulation and renewal. We meet less frequently but the quality of friendship is strengthened and sustained with the additional indulgence of long-distance telephone calls.

The freedom of maturity lies in the appreciation of the intrinsic discipline which freedom imposes. Frustrations are nothing new, although aging presents them in unfamiliar forms. Coming to terms

with them may be a challenge either in accepting them gracefully or devising ways in which they may be overcome. Now I feel I can express my opinions objectively rather than emotionally combining sincerity, humour and courtesy. I am not obliged, as sometimes happened, to tolerate those whose personalities jarred and irritated. Learning within my means, another well-learned lesson, I am able to decide where I will indulge myself, and then thoroughly enjoy that indulgence.

Memories of other places, times, people and emotions are warmed with recollection, bitterness and anguish blurred by time. The keen, sharp edge of disillusion has merged into the bluntness of reality.

Today's delights are reflected in the merry eyes of a child, the comforting presence of a favourite animal, shadows of trees on sunlit snow, and a deeper appreciation of every new day.



LILLIAN PHILLIPS

I had a friend, once, who was fond of saying, "This business of getting old is a big mistake!", but I cannot say that I share his feelings. I am sure there are many seniors who will agree with me that increasing years do not necessarily mean that one has no alternative but to shuffle off into the sunset of senility.

Having reached 80 plus, I see no reason to spend the rest of my life in a rocking chair, listening to my arteries harden. The joy of living is a state of mind, and a matter of having the courage to go out into the world and find adventure within the sphere of one's endurance. It has been said that those who panic at the thought of failure deserve the limitations to which their fears commit them.

Of *course* old age has its drawbacks. There are aches and pains and warts and wens, and one hesitates to buy green bananas anymore. But that old bugaboo "peer pressure" is diminished, there are no more stock market jitters or income tax worries, and when queueing up at the supermarket check-out that grey hair and little-old-lady look can sometimes get you to the front of the line, which takes a "wait" off your mind!

And how fortuitous for us, unlike our parents before us, to be living in a time when our government does its best to make us financially stable and medically secure. So many avenues are open to us to keep us mentally alert and happy, to ward off old-age boredom and depression. I have discovered craft and academic courses, and a whole new world has opened up. I am experiencing great pleasure working with oils and brushes, and although no gallery is exactly begging to display my efforts, I have had many hours of challenge and fun with my "dabbling." And then, oh then, there is my beloved little Commodore 64 computer. How exciting to learn that I can make programs for it that really work. A course in Tai Chi I found very worthwhile and

healthful, and the other day at our YMCA swimming exercise class, we were *square-dancing* in the middle of the pool!

Then there is the plus that can only be earned with passing years — the children, the grandchildren and the great-grandchildren who have risen up to revere and love us. How joyful when they all come home for holidays, and I can cook up a storm, catch up on their news, and listen once again to the hum of the hive.

So I say to my friend who thinks old age is a big mistake: “Hang in there. Be grateful to all the officials and committees who are working so hard to improve your lifestyle. Be happy. And never, never let your brain know how old you are!”



WILF PINTO

In this day and age it takes a great deal of courage to survive when one considers the qualities involved are endurance and constancy. No wonder then the transition from the humdrum everyday life to the glorious age of seniority deserves recognition.

We are truly a hardy bunch to have made the grade when we look back to our 30s and 40s and the experiences of taking in our stride the numerous ups and downs and the many adjustments we have had to make to keep up.

The gradual descent from the top began in our 50s as we anticipated somewhat apprehensively the prospect of becoming senior citizens in the foreseeable future. Having survived this period now found us in the magical age of the 60s. It's the time we had grudgingly waited for all along and, in an effort to minimise life's trials and tribulations, resorted to daydreaming whilst wondering what the next few years held in store.

Caught up in this reverie, time has flown by and suddenly that day is upon us. Birthday greetings — some of them referring to us as Sexy Senior Citizen and other nice things — began to arrive. Strangely enough that apprehension has vanished, giving way to exuberance, and we are overcome by a feeling of being more vibrant, dynamic and hopeful of the future.

What a thrilling experience! Most of all it is the satisfaction and exhilaration derived from this newly acquired status. A significant accomplishment indeed — another milestone in the ever-changing journey through life.

And with it comes a fuller appreciation of what philosophers have been saying all along — that age is not measured in terms of growing old; rather it is a state of mind. For as long as we remain young at heart

optimism and confidence will prevail, with soundness of mind and body being overriding factors.

There are material compensations as well which keep on unfolding in a rewarding way with each passing year. This is a wonderful life with all kinds of concessions to help along the way. Unexpected but welcome “red-carpet treatment” in the stores, the arts and entertainment sphere and almost everywhere. These courtesies bring a feeling of warmth, honour and respect.

Senility and old age have been referred to as syndromes and a figment of the imagination which can be transcended by a sense of pride and elation in joining that elite group affectionately referred to as senior citizens. Let us then give this seniority a top-priority rating by raising a toast to the tenacity, endurance and young-at-heart outlook of seniors everywhere!



ARDELL PIPER

On a bright spring day my father was called in from ploughing to hitch up the horse and buggy and drive seven miles for the doctor. The doctor came back with him to deliver me. We had no telephone at that time. On April 1st, 1903, I was born.

I went to school from that farm, walking one-and-a-half miles each way, unless the weather was bad, when the horse and buggy were used once more.

My mother, an expert needleworker, taught her girls to sew and knit. My first knitting was done on wooden needles made by my father. I still use those needles at times today and will cherish them forever.

In 1926 I married and then had children, who are now parents themselves. I became a grandmother and great-grandmother for the ninth time recently.

One of my granddaughters, when working with the Children's Aid Society in Northern Ontario, wrote asking: "Grandma, these kids have so little, will you please knit some mitts for them?" My first parcel contained three pairs of mitts. All my days now are filled making mitts, caps, scarves, afghans, baby jackets and bonnets for children in the north. Mitts are my special project. Having made 100 pair last year alone, I'm well on my way to another 100 for 1988.

The stories of children and their pathetic situations when taken into care by CAS are heart-touching, urging me on in my labour of love. My work has been called "Mrs. Piper's Mission" by my friends, many of whom help with knitting, crocheting and sewing. Many bales of

clothes are sent every year. It is so rewarding to know the things we send are keeping so many little people warm and cozy.

The last few years I have been making special gift packages for Christmas. They contain costume jewellery, pins, pencils, soap, combs, note pads, games and dolls.

Four years ago, I was given a trip to Kenora, with my daughter and granddaughter as escorts. We were treated royally, shown around the surrounding area, and attended a reception in my honour at the Holiday Inn expressing their grateful thanks.

While in Kenora I visited children in a receiving home. One little native boy climbed on my knees and hugged and kissed me and wouldn't let me go. When I got in the car to leave, the foster mother held him in her arms. He was crying and waving his little hand "Goodbye Grandma." I was so touched by this that I shed a few tears, too.

Seventeen years ago my husband passed away and I was alone. How good it is to have a worthwhile cause to fill the long, lonesome hours of each day. I just hope and pray that God will grant me strength and sight to carry on "Mrs. Piper's Mission" to the end of my days.



ISOBEL PLANT

How should I know what it means to be a senior, having just joined the ranks in January of this year? Even as I sit reflecting on my new status, I have yet to receive my first Old Age Security cheque!

The point is, however, that I am reflecting, and indeed have been doing so for several years—ever since a waitress in a restaurant asked me if I qualified for the senior discount. “Do I look that old?” I thought as I replied: “Certainly not, but I’ll let you know when I do!” (And I did, whereupon we both had a great laugh as she served me my first 50-cent cup of coffee.)

In a way, that may sum up the gradual transition from resentment to acknowledgement of one of the inevitable facts of life, aging. The next step, it seems to me, is to receive this gift with joy. After all, every day is a gift—something I have realized ever since a successful bout with cancer 20 years ago.

Still, it is bittersweet: the gradual leave-taking from the familiar details of one’s professional life (“This is the last time I’ll be attending the staff Christmas party,” “This is the last time I’ll be teaching Hamlet,” “Thank God, this is my last cafeteria supervision!”), drafting the letter of resignation from a career in teaching which has brought such satisfaction, checking out one’s RRSPs, all the while wondering, “Will there be enough money to see me through whatever years are left to me?”

So much for the hard part. Now for the anticipation, the sense of exhilaration that comes with looking forward to doing so many of the things that have had to be put on the back burner over the years. Some of these are very simple, like sleeping in, watching a favorite morning talk show, being able to have lunch when you feel like it, not when the timetable says so.

It means time for reading and swimming, for being more than just a dues-paying member of a local hospital foundation or shelter for abused women and children, for joining a story-tellers' group, for more active involvement in church activities, perhaps even running for the school board. It means being able to say, "Yes, I'd love to go out for dinner," knowing there won't be a pile of unmarked assignments greeting you reproachfully when you get home.

I can hardly wait.

Meanwhile, as I look forward to the future, I have as my model a 96-year-old mother who, despite being in a wheelchair, her vision and hearing failing, still manages to be as interested in the affairs of the world and her community as in the activities of her ever-extending family, who enjoys a glass of wine and a good joke — a woman who has had more than her share of "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" but continues to affirm, with singer Neil Diamond, that "life can't kill the dream I dream."



MARGARET PRIETZ

In a couple of weeks I will be 72 years old. It seems strange, but I do not feel that very much has changed since my younger days. I do not feel old, certainly not like the stereotype picture the media present of old people. I still love to go swimming, walk in the woods, listen to the birds, smell the flowers in my garden, admire a pink and orange sunset and enjoy babysitting my eight-month-old grandson who is very energetic and keeps me hopping. I sing the same folk songs to him that I used to sing to my children. Soon I will read the same old stories to him, too. As long as I have my health, I cannot see much wrong with being a senior. I get reduced prices at the GO-train, buses and the movies and several other institutions, and the government pays me a pension.

Although my daughter said, “I don’t see you slowing down,” which of course pleased me, I know I have slowed down a bit. Sometimes I wonder why I cannot get more done in a day, why the time goes by so fast. I am always busy and, I guess, that is the secret. I took up pottery making some 20 years ago, and cannot find enough time to do what I want to do with my clay. But I do have to force myself, more often than not, not to give in to inertia.

Sure, little aches and pains come and go, but that is nothing new — everybody has them at all ages. But there is one thing I dislike about it. I am not as sure-footed as I used to be, especially in the winter time when the roads are slippery. I dislike it when I step so gingerly — like a senior. When you are young, you just go and do not give it any thought.

I know some wonderful people who are some 15 years older than I am and who are still full of vigour, interested in everything that is going on around them and taking up new things, like learning French, and who always want to know what there is to be seen around the next corner. Of course, I also know people who are the opposite. Old age is an attitude, as different from one old person to the next as children are from one another.



ROSE ROMBERG

Our government officially proclaims our senior status at 65. However, for individuals it depends by what yardstick the life is measured. I thought my mother at 32 was an old lady. She died at 80 and to me she looked younger than I remembered when I was a child of 8.

I worked as a dental assistant in two offices earning the monumental sum of \$12 a week. My father died aged 47. I had to give up my prestigious position to earn more money in a shoe factory (a sweat shop) as I had to support my mother and five younger sisters. Then I felt mature. I felt like a senior. I was 17.

At 42 I became a widow with two teenagers to support. I felt like a senior. My birthday each year was always a special event with nary a thought about aging. However, with my first pair of bifocals, I will confess I experienced a pang! The time I squeezed a tube of Nivea Cream to brush my teeth also gave me a jolt.

Maybe you know you've arrived when the cashier at the theatre no longer looks at you suspiciously or asks for your I.D., or when the bus driver no longer says for all to hear, "Lady, you sure don't look like a senior." I loved that. How about defrosting the fridge several times a day? Yes, I do the same things today that I did 25 years ago; it just takes a little l-o-n-g-e-r. Maybe you become a senior when you come to terms with death. But what the hell. It means I can look back and reflect on a past rich in a myriad of happenings from the depths of despair to moments of joy, almost reaching a star.

Recently at dinner, I asked my wealthy host who was celebrating his 75th birthday, "David, what does it mean to you to be a senior?" I expected a profound answer. In his booming voice, he laughingly replied, "Look, here in Florida I can go to the movies for a dollar on Tuesdays."

I have been living witness to the devastation of the influenza epidemic after the First World War and to the present AIDS epidemic. I have seen a house in our downtown Toronto purchased for \$2,000. Today on the same street, a townhouse sells for \$200,000. I have witnessed the social structure change from the reign of King George V and Queen Mary to our modern Princess Di. From the Holocaust to the establishment of the state of Israel. Computers, planes, telephones — shrinking our world.

Now that we are on the threshold of our holiday season, I am reminded of a portion of the Haggadah, our Passover prayer book. After each blessing we say, “Dayeinu!” (It would have been enough). On the eve of April 1st, as my family are gathered around my dinner table to celebrate the first Seder, I will watch misty-eyed as my grandchildren participate in our ancient tradition that has filtered down through the ages. I am in the autumn of my life with spring in my heart. I am a senior. “Dayeinu!”



MARGUERITE ROSSITER

Now I don't mind being called a senior as long as I receive the respect and privileges that go along with it, but I strongly object to being addressed as an "old age pensioner" by our government. I'm so indignant about this that I identify my monthly cheque as Security or O.A. Pension, hoping no one knows what O.A. stands for. I gratefully accept the pension as a duly earned award for a job well done, but I'm not old. I've seen old people and I'm certainly not one of THEM. In fact, I'm an 18-year-old trapped in an aging body.

Being basically lazy, I love retirement. At last I have the time and freedom to do what I want, barring the restrictions of a set income and creaky joints. It's like being on an eternal vacation. (Maybe eternal is not a good word to use here; change it to permanent.) I golf, curl and bowl and fail to understand why my scores keep getting worse. I'm told it has something to do with timing, co-ordination and possibly a little muscle deterioration. Oh well, someone has to come in last. I won a skunk trophy last year and I'm working on another to make book-ends.

As you grow older, time has a perverse habit of shrinking. I'm very busy trying to condense 24 hours of living into a 12-hour day, but there are times I fondly remember friends and relatives who are gone. Today, I try to pick friends who are a little younger and hopefully more durable. Some of these friends still have husbands. I lost mine several years ago and wouldn't want another one. Anyway, I'm very contented with my electric blanket, my book and my pussy cat. (You must have a cat when you live alone so you can't be accused of talking to yourself.)

Friends ask if I miss going out to work. I certainly do. I miss bubonic plague too. To be fair, it wasn't all that bad. There is a lot of

satisfaction in the role of mother and a sense of accomplishment in working.

There is a down side. I look in the mirror only in emergencies. (Don't let the poets fool you — character lines and laugh lines are just plain old wrinkles.) I curl up in my easy chair to watch TV and it takes me 15 minutes to uncurl. I have glasses for reading, glasses for driving and glasses to find my glasses. I notice good diction has disappeared and everyone goes around mumbling. I find it impossible to open those child-proof containers, which any child can open but which are in fact 100 percent grandmother-proof. Worse than all this, my favourite foods give me indigestion.

I forgot to mention memory. Sometimes I can remember numbers but names elude me and I'm becoming a master at subterfuge. One trick is to use long drawn-out h-i-i-i-i-i-s so a name becomes unnecessary. I'm getting used to overdone and scorched food and hope I remember to turn off the burners on the stove.

In spite of all these pros and cons, my life has achieved a serenity and I feel I'm in a well-earned hiatus between the pressure and turmoil of everyday living and — well, who knows what's at the other end?



K.G. SALTER

I could, of course, enumerate all the monetary gains that being a senior now means, but that would be just one part of the advantages. Not that any of us receive these bonuses with ingratitude or casual acceptance. No, most of us, I'm sure, recall that first monthly cheque (and oh, how welcome in most cases) but more probably remember that childish feeling of default when we first went to a cinema or took a bus expedition at senior prices.

No doubt there were many of us, still hale and hearty and active in our jobs, who were both shocked and surprised by that tangible difference a day made. Did this really mean we had to join, willy-nilly, that grey and white world of creaking muscles called old age? However, as time slipped by and we felt no different we began, I think, to see this new life with pride and eagerness. As with the other passages of our lives, we could use this transition as a beginning, not an ending.

For me, and I suspect for many others, this meant more than anything else a world of new opportunities — a world of new freedoms, both emotionally and mentally. Time was no longer something to be passed and got over with, but a glorious expansion of creativity, adventure and new experiences. Any encroachments of natural disabilities were to be treated hence as tiresome irritations rather than excuses.

Has any generation lived through more convulsive upheavals? I doubt it. From idealistic and unreal years to the cynicism and harsh realities of the Depression and of World War 2, through the post-war swings, we have been forced to grow and learn and survive. Time now allows us to live the vistas we once had as dreams. What a challenge!

There is still much to be done to turn this world into a better and more loving place, and it is now our duty and our privilege to guide

and help the next generation to a better understanding of what being a human can mean.

I hope we can do this by always keeping a keen interest in everything around us, by honing our sensibilities to the beauty and potentialities that are always with us, by constantly being aware of the dangers of a faulty use of our environment, seeing ways to right wrongs, and making our ideas felt. By letting go of the many narrow limits that bound us before, and by keeping healthy and active in our bodies, we can still grow and expand, and use these years to the best of our ability.

Above all, let us listen with patience and understanding to the problems of the young as they, too, face the trials and doubts of their lives, so that we can say, as we bid farewell: "I have lived well, loved much, and left the world a better place than I found it."



MILDRED SAUNDERS

I am a senior. I have lived the great experience, the exciting adventure, the ups and downs, the good and bad. My grandchildren consider me historical. I consider myself a mature adult full of years of wisdom and common sense. My children treat me gently. Quietly I file away the past. It is necessary, the time is short.

Life is a whirlwind, ever expanding, flying up and out. At the vortex I knew "young," at the centre "middle age," at the top circling ever wider I learn "old." Sometimes I wonder who's the stranger in the glass! My body creaks and groans, yet my selfhood remains unchanged.

To be a senior means change. The new role "old" demands it. Selfhood must expand. Attitudes need upgrading allowing faith and common sense to increase wisdom. Preparation must begin for the greatest adventure of all. Courage and a sense of fun must be learned to enliven the way. I am changing to make the best of it!



MAE SKEOCH

When I became 30 it seemed the beginning of a sophisticated stage in my life. I now knew *some* of the answers, could dress with flair, smoke with aplomb and be quite definite about my opinions, though always with hidden concern.

Then 40 rolled around and I was totally upset. I could not reconcile to “life begins at 40.” I felt it was more of an ending and I took a quick survey of my accomplishments up to that point and felt there was not that much for me to crow about.

My 50th birthday came and went and I can’t even recall how I felt. It was a nondescript, blank birthday.

But my 60th birthday was devastating. This, I thought, really was the end. I realized I had done very little of what I had dreamed about. I was almost sure that I had only a year or two more to go.

And then I became 65!

On that birthday I felt some sort of special thrill. I was finally reaching a grand age when I knew all the answers and could also ask all the questions. There was a sudden abandon in everything. If I did or said the wrong thing, it didn’t really matter. “To hell with it!” — I could even swear now without feeling pangs of guilt. At 65 I was entitled to all of that and my concerns for what other people thought of me faded quite away and I was suddenly set free — free to work or not to work, free to participate in things or not to participate, and all this without having to make excuses.

Now that I was 65 I had come “to be.” It meant having the time I wanted or needed; time to stand and stare at the beauty of nature without dashing for the subway; time to sit in the parks on sunny summer days and commune with the flowers and the birds; or sit at the window on stormy winter days, watching the snow blow in all

directions, feeling safe and warm, and sympathizing with the “workers of the world” bracing the weather.

It is rather wonderful to be 65 and feel like 25; wonderful to hold the knowledge and wisdom that the years have granted me; wonderful to receive respect from the many fine young people who cross my path, and to admire them in return; wonderful to have time to volunteer my services to others who are incapacitated, lonely, aged or ill, and feel the glow of their gratitude in return.

Altogether, it is wonderful to breathe, eat and move in rhythm to the excitement of being 65 years young!



JOAN G. SMITH

Being a senior means more than just slowing things down a little. It means that we remember. We remember our parents talking about Vimy Ridge, the Winnipeg strike and the Depression when we were growing up and our future didn't look too bright. We remember thousands of unemployed marching across the country, soup kitchens, hard, hard work in the fields — we remember all those things.

We recall the King and Queen being here in 1939 — and Hitler's war. Some of us remember other countries, other voices, other languages. Some of us think of George Formby, and Gracie Fields, and Vera Lynn, and London, Dieppe, Ortona, Normandy, Holland.

Mackenzie King — and our children growing up in a Canada our parents would not have recognized. Pierre Trudeau, who never promised us a rose garden; Montreal in 1970, James Cross and Margaret, who made us more of an international news item than we had been for years.

We seniors look back over half of Canada's history and we are proud of what we see, because we were there. We were born here, or we chose to come here, and we do find today's Canada a little strange at times. Personal computers; young girls trying to look as if they were 30 years old; boys with colored, lacquered hair; and all the rest of it. But "all the rest of it" is a result of what we have done in the last 60 or 70 years. We have helped to make this sprawling, improbable country into what it is today, and we love it. New faces continue to arrive from what Shakespeare called "less happier lands" to join us and to work with us. Some of them bring skills with them and some of them bring problems, but problems are nothing new to us. We have

met, and solved, many difficulties in the course of our numerous years.

Long winters, flooded Aprils, glorious summers, sublime autuns, the True North Strong and Free, and here we are. Slower, harder of hearing, not quite so light on our feet as we were when we danced to Glenn Miller's music. But here we are, still enjoying life and looking forward, as we have always done. Looking forward to so much as we look back on so much. Proud of ourselves, and grateful to have reached this far. Glad to remember the good times and sensibly forgetting many of the bad times.

That's what it is, to be a senior. God bless us, every one.



MILDRED STONE

Being a senior means, firstly, that we have survived, beat the odds against dying young and, with the proper attitude, are about to embark on an exciting journey.

Taking advantage of the years bestowed on us, lessons have been learned by prior mistakes, our identity has been firmly established and we have become the person we wish to be, maturing and achieving inner growth. Obviously, this is a difficult task, a formidable one indeed, but it is necessary to enable us to continue our life a happier, more fulfilled person.

We realize the advantage of an open mind because, after all, we still have a future. A wise senior does not dwell upon a painful past for it is a waste of energy, vigor that can be utilized to blaze a fresh start. Few people live to be seniors without undergoing a major tragedy in their lives. Many, despite serious setbacks, have made a positive contribution to society instead of wallowing in self-pity, becoming embittered in their latter years.

Those of us fortunate enough to have children and grandchildren are blessed, especially if offspring have succeeded in their chosen fields and are happy, well-adjusted citizens. So this is the time of reaping the rewards of all our well-timed past endeavours.

How privileged that we are of the generation in which the study of geriatrics has provided specialized doctors with the knowledge to understand the aging process and that medicine has proven a boon to the care of the elderly.

We seniors were born not of the “me” generation of the ’60s but rather of the “you” generation of the ’20s. Surely this should enable us to cope with hair that has lost its lustre and fullness, eyes that begin to dim and steps no longer quick and agile. These are only physical

manifestations of age, however. Hopefully, minds needs not atrophy if used to their full capacity.

Laughter is an activity that does not cloud with age. Seniors who are cheerful and still interested remain more interesting people. If we live, we get older, but we need never grow OLD.

A positive attitude makes the difference. A young 80-year-old friend refers to his cane, glasses and hearing aid as “helpers” rather than encumbrances. As we age, the working of the universe becomes more wondrous. The sun rises and sets in its splendour for everyone over 65 just as it does for the young. It is there for all of us to savour.

Being a senior we realize life is a gift to open with enthusiasm, to live and celebrate its possibilities, to explore its mysteries and discover its meaning. I have been chosen to live my golden years and intend to enjoy it to the best of my capabilities with interest, concern for others and, above all, love.



WINNIFRED SUTHERLAND

What does it mean to be a senior?
A tranquil sunset! A happy ending! A new beginning!
It was not always thus.

As a child I was envious of my playmates who had grandparents. Then one day while playing with a new friend, a storm drove us indoors. The kitchen we entered was darkened by the clouds, but an oil lamp and the glow from the front of a huge woodstove lit up all but the corners. The room was almost unbearably hot, but close to the stove, in multiple black garments including shawls, sat two people. Their faces seemed expressionless but their hands were touching. The mother of the house spoke — nay, shouted — kindly to them explaining who I was. “Don’t mind the old folks,” she said to me. “They’re a bit childish but, after all, they are 75 years old and have worked hard. They have no kin but me and my children, but as long as I am able they’ll be cared for.” She didn’t look very able.

I began yearning for other things than grandparents.

In the back field of my father’s farm was a small shack, age and intended use unknown. It was home to an Irish squatter whose age and usefulness were also unknown. The neighbours gave him food and occasionally discarded clothing. On churning days he came up the lane with a honey pail for the buttermilk he loved. His pail was always filled, though buttermilk was an ingredient of the bread and biscuits mother’s large family consumed.

Sometimes, on a moonlit night, Andy would reel unsteadily down the lane, singing loudly, in a fine tenor, some song of old Ireland.

One frigid winter morning, I came down to our warm kitchen to see Father and Bill half-carrying Andy in the door. A slight stroke had left

him shivering, whimpering and drooling. While Mother tried to clean, warm and feed him, Father hitched the team to the democrat. Somehow they got Andy, warmly blanketed, onto the seat between them, and were off to the poorhouse. What else could they do?

Today, my 92-year-old neighbour, flourishing his cane, walks jauntily down the street toward his daily visit with his cronies in the coffee shop. Another 80-year-old steps into her car and is off to a bridge game. A large van stops at the door and a lady in a wheelchair is carefully ensconced inside. Her destination: a free arthritic clinic.

The blessings which elderly folk enjoy today have transformed the Old Folks into Senior Citizens. Do they appreciate them? If not they should start counting.

And speaking of counting reminds me that I haven't really time for it. If I have written more than 500 words, just discard this dissertation. My 89th birthday celebration is soon and there are things to be done. Bye.



JEANNE SWINSON

It means sleeping in late in the morning if you want to.
No more punching a time clock, or bucking rush-hour traffic
on the subway and buses.
It's wearing a purple dress and a red hat.
Buying a small child an ice cream cone.
Treating yourself to a bouquet of roses and then inviting a neighbour to supper.
Bringing hamburgers and coffee to the new people moving into your building.
Feeling like Scrooge did when he awakened in the morning laughing and jumping with joy.
Life is very good indeed.



CY TORONTOW

“**L**ook, Mary,” Doc Jones had said, “I can give you pills to help your depression, but I’m sorta old-fashioned about chemicals. Why don’t you wait a while, see if you can get back on an even keel by yourself? Maybe try counting your blessings, or do whatever you can to think positive, push away your grief.”

Well, maybe Doc had something. After leaving his office she had decided to walk home, despite that persistent pain in her right knee. It was a beautiful day in late September. She’d taken the long way home through the park, trying to ignore the knee.

Now, resting on a park bench, she was watching a group of boisterous youngsters playing touch football. They looked to be in their early teens, bursting with concentrated energy. Hmmm, she thought, now there would be a blessing, if I could trade this broken-down frame for one of their sturdy bodies.

It had been six months since Tom’s death, and the depression seemed, if anything, to be getting worse. She couldn’t stop remembering their 45 years, the aching sense of loss.

She looked up at a sudden shout from the players and noticed, for the first time, the trees around the park and in the distance. They were a wondrous blaze of extravagant color — reds, yellows, greens, crimsons, and every shade of gold. She’d been so immersed in her — face it, girl — self-pity that she hadn’t noticed the arrival of fall! Quite suddenly, her eyes brimmed with tears.

But they weren’t tears of sadness, they were somehow like those which came when she viewed a great painting, or an act of kindness. What was it? Well, I too, she thought, have reached my own autumn. And maybe, like Mother Nature, I should be celebrating this period

that heralds both the joy of living and acceptance of the end.

Inexplicably, a bubble of joy arose from deep within her. It was not like the joy of youth she was watching; it was deeper, more serene, and as she knew with sudden conviction, it would not easily be quenched, as theirs would be when the game ended. The message she had just received was as loud and clear as the colours: this was the sweetest time of all, a time when feelings and emotions must be more intensely felt because of their crowding into an ever-decreasing time span. Her joy was that of a mystic who has caught a momentary glimpse of the mystery behind existence.

She was suddenly hungry. Her mouth watered at the thought of tea and hot buttered scones. She got up, anxious to be home. She knew she could now remember Tom with gratefulness rather than regret.

The pain in her knee had not gone away, but now it was a bittersweet reminder that she was alive, she was aware, and thankful for an insight into the joy of living.



YVETTE TRÉAU DE COELI

Une personne âgée, mais qu'est-ce? À vrai dire bien osée je serais de vouloir la décrire.

*Ce sont des cheveux blancs sur une robe
aux tons gais
Au collet de guipure par ses soins tricoté,
C'est le coeur qui absout et le coeur qui pardonne
Quand la solitude entoure celle que l'on abandonne,
C'est celle qui se souvient des heures ensoleillées,
Laissant aux souvenirs la saveur des étés,
Les peines, on les oublie, les bonheurs irradient
Une vie prolongée. "C'est beau, c'est bon la vie,"
Se dit-elle chaque matin. "Merci, merci, mon Dieu,
De me prêter ce jour. Que toujours soient heureux
Ceux que j'aime." Et puis, à petits pas, elle va déjeuner.
Le printemps est en elle. Qu'importent les années!*

On a peine à qualifier "l'âge avancé" d'âge d'or, que Larousse qualifie de "l'un des quatre âges de la mythologie classique, période de bonheur et d'abondance et, au figuré, période d'éclat."

L'idéal serait d'être "entre deux âges", qui fait l'effet de n'être ni jeune, ni vieux, et de le rester. Il arrive cependant un temps où l'on est "d'un certain âge", soit que l'on n'est plus jeune, ou que l'on commence à vieillir. Je me méfie de ce qualificatif "troisième âge", qui, dit Larousse, n'est autre chose que la vieillesse.

Une personne âgée, cela veut dire âgée en années, agée en expérience de la vie, cet âge qui fait dire à qui la regarde: "Vraiment, elle n'a pas d'âge". Elle a de l'ambition, elle a des projets, elle sourit à la vie. Souvent, à force de sourire, elle n'a presque pas de rides. Elle

n'est âgée que par le nombre des années. Elle a conservé cet idéal d'une éternelle jeunesse qui fait qu'à 82 ans, lors de la St-Valentin, elle a entraîné son mari de 90 ans dans une valse lente qui avait saveur des années des "Froufrous", des "Tendresses", des "Voulez-vous danser grand'mère?" Elle a bien des petits tiraillements dans les os, mais qui n'en n'a pas, dans un climat qui est celui de nos hivers canadiens. Elle a appris les fonctions tonifiantes des Pain killers, des mouches de moutarde que nos mères nous appliquaient sur la poitrine, de l'huile de ricin dont le souvenir nous faisait frémir.

Une personne âgée ne l'est que dans la mesure où elle y met de la volonté. Le tricot, pour elle, conserve à ses doigts raidis une souplesse. Regardez-la tricoter sans relâche d'adorables châles pour le nouveau-né, ou bien des bandelettes pour panser les blessures des pauvres victimes de la lèpre dans les pays africains. J'ai vu de si jolies cartes de Noël sur lesquelles une personne "moins jeune" avait collé des herbes séchées, affaire de passer agréablement le temps. D'autres ont quelques notions de peinture, art qui occupe agréablement le temps.

Je connais une "personne âgée" de 72 ans qui a choisi d'occuper sa retraite à écrire. Elle entraîne sa mémoire à mettre sur papier ses impressions, ses souvenirs d'enfance. Elle aime la nature et la fait aimer à ses lecteurs. Quel bonheur elle a aussi de regarder à la T.V. "Anne of Green Gables". Et, si elle entend moins bien, comme cela se trouve fréquemment chez son entourage, elle peut regarder, se souvenir et s'émouvoir. Le chant d'un oiseau, le sourire d'un enfant, la beauté d'une fleur, tout cela la rend heureuse. Sa compagnie est agréable pour les autres: elle est si douce et charmante! Elle a besoin d'être aimée, et combien nous l'aimons!!



NORAH TUSTAIN

We seniors come in all shapes, sizes, colours, creeds and ethnic backgrounds. Some of us are mentally gifted; a few mentally retarded. Many are physically healthy, but most of us are suffering some of the wear and tear of age. Rich or poor, we all have one thing in common. We have lived and experienced life for over half a century. Long gone is the callowness of youth, and well learned are the lessons of middle age. We have survived unbelievable odds, and now we are mellowing into the final stages of life. We are the sum of our inherited characteristics, plus the hand that fate has dealt us and the efforts we have made on our own behalf.

Look around and you will see us everywhere. We are that mousey little grey-haired woman with the shopping cart hauling home the week's food. That overly made-up buxom lady, still tottering around on those heels she should have abandoned years ago. That old man, sitting alone on the park bench, seemingly gazing into infinity. That equally elderly but well-dressed gentleman, guiding a smart younger woman into a restaurant. That sweaty individual in a track suit, slowly but determinedly jogging along the sidewalk.

We are the dear old soul of either sex, propped up in a chair in a home for the aged, waiting for the visitor who may never come. That cheerful and compassionate lady who suddenly does arrive to brighten up their lives for a couple of hours twice a week. That retired man who is so busy ferrying others of his own age around town that he hasn't time to feel sorry for himself. We are the sufferers from Alzheimer's Disease, lost in a world closed to the rest of humanity. Those concerned men and women who are writing up their family

histories for posterity. The Grandmas who baby-sit in spite of encroaching arthritis and are glad to entertain visiting grandchildren. The older couple who travel the world, still absorbing knowledge, sometimes studying with Elderhostel groups.

We are also the “bag lady” or the derelict man, victims of poverty from birth to death, who make our homes on the streets of impersonal cities. We are the elderly rich who study the stock market daily, and feel secure of our place in heaven because of our calculated tax-deductible donations to charity. We are the friendly and kindly oldsters who help to organize outings, drama, games and social activities for our less able fellow seniors.

We are the oldest part of that “greying population” soon to become the largest sector of the voting public. This will give us more clout than our ancestors ever had, age for age. We are the seniors of Canada, about to be recognized for our intrinsic worth!



ARIE VERDUIJN

Becoming a senior is not a basic or sudden transformation. The ardent fisherman will continue his efforts to catch the species he prefers. Those who are fond of sports will not give up watching games. The musicians among the seniors do not all of a sudden lose interest in their favorite composers. The readers do not forgo books and most volunteer workers will not hastily stop their activities.

The dissatisfied middle-ager will likely be a grumpy senior and no person who made it a habit to be happy and to spread happiness will change the outlook on life just because the calendar changed.

Instead, for most seniors, becoming one is receiving a most precious gift. The gift of time.

Time to devote to all the things which, in the past, could never be squeezed into a 24-hour day.

Time to enjoy life to the fullest within health limits and without having to fear crushing medical bills.

Time to love spouse, children and grandchildren in a new, special way.

Time to give of themselves and show concern, even when nobody asks anymore for advice.

Time to be a real friend and receive friendship in return.

Time to count blessings. For most seniors it includes living in a beautiful free country, without undue hardships. A country where one can serve God without being persecuted and be a good neighbour without reservations.

Time also to share from one's abundance with the have-nots close by and overseas. For more than anything else, to be a senior means being allowed to derive satisfaction from sharing and giving.



HELEN WEIDER

My answer to the question “What does it mean to be a senior” could be expressed in three words — freedom, peace and tranquillity.

I am 81 years old, in excellent health and comfortable situation. My husband and I came to Canada before the outbreak of World War II, and during the decades that followed, the enterprises that he founded, Blue Mountain (Ski) Resorts and Blue Mountain Pottery, contributed heavily to the Canadian economy. Canada, in return, was generous to us. With the years of hardship and struggle successfully behind us, with four well-educated children grown and self-supporting, I was looking confidently and with a certain amusement to my 65th birthday. Instead, on that very day I said a last farewell to my husband, killed in a car accident two days before.

It is the first tragedy in old age, when the mate of long years departs, just when the existential worries are over, and the two could live the rest of their lives peacefully, pursuing interests that had to be postponed until retirement.

If it is the wife who is left behind, she may be loved, cherished, respected or tolerated by her closest family and friends, charitably called “the old lady” by casual strangers or “Grandma” by the more folksy ones. I detest that. Only my eight grandchildren should have the right to call me “Baba,” the endearment of “Grandma” in our language. An old woman alone is considered by many to be a third-class citizen.

The brutal aspect of old age is the physical deterioration. The old saying “You are as old as you feel” is a small comfort. It doesn’t smooth out the wrinkles or prevent the hair and lips from getting thinner, the nose longer, and the body from shrinking. Poverty is cruel

at any age, but usually we do not have much less at 65 than before, and our needs lessen with age.

On the positive side, we gain certain privileges, and the precious gift of time. For some of us who have the health and means, travelling can bring the ultimate joy. For the less fortunate, long walks in parks or open country, giving closeness to nature, can be most rewarding. I still can walk some 25 kilometres in the mountains, and such days give me victory over old age.

Circumstances have resulted in my belonging to three beautiful countries: Czechoslovakia where I was born, now pathetic, brutally silenced in her quest for freedom; Spain, her past glory behind, struggling valiantly to assert herself in a world of computers; and Canada, young and vigorous. I love them all, but especially Canada, to whom I pledged my loyalty so many years ago, and that pledge dies only with me. Canada accepted us, gave us shelter when the world was on fire, and gave us freedom and dignity.

I am quite content to be a senior, and have a certain compassion for the young, who face so much uncertainty in the future. Occasionally I have a pang of guilt that we who live so long may become a burden to the young. To be a senior in Canada means to live, unmolested, in freedom, peace and tranquillity. These last three words express fully to me the meaning of being old.



KENNETH WINTERTON

“Senior” is just another label. Perhaps you have had some before, such as “child,” “parent,” “engineer,” but there is no reason why you cannot be a unique member of any class to which you happen to belong. In fact, it is important that you do not resign yourself to becoming a typical senior. It is well known that they are garrulous and argumentative, moody and complaining, bossy and interfering, childish and petulant, and slow and over-cautious.

Of course, some old people seem to mellow, acquire experience and wisdom, and exhibit a special peace and contentment. Most of us must make a special effort to move in this direction and to avoid the common faults.

Every age has its own special difficulties. Remember the painful shyness, the blunders and inexperience of youth? More recently, there was the struggle of adult life, the stress, the hurry and the need to make a mark of some kind. The difficulties do not disappear — they just become different. Every one is a challenge and for seniors, challenge is never in short supply. Their bodies go downhill, and there may be physical ailments like hardening of the arteries, degenerative bone disease and muscle weakness to contend with. The senses may be blunted, memory failing and mental activity diminishing. Even on days when you feel pretty good, there may be reminders that you are a drain on state funds, or a burden on the family, or some other kind of nuisance. Retirement, at the magic age of 65, seems to have a special fear for some people — the ultimate rejection. Small wonder that though most people want to live a long time, few desire to become old. Maurice Chevalier may have put it best when he said: “Growing old is not so bad when you consider the alternative.”

If you have had the good fortune and the good sense to acquire

some skills, special interests and hobbies that can be carried over into senior years, these should be, must be, further developed. Goethe was over 80 when he worked on Faust. Edison and Bernard Shaw had not retired at 90. A favorite of mine is Oscar Shapiro who attained the chess master title for the first time at the age of 74.

You may even be one of those special people who can make a late entry into an entirely new field. Grandma Moses started to paint in her 80th year.

Think of the older people of your acquaintance whom you most admire. Is it not their boldness, their spirit and their sense of adventure that compels your admiration? To join them, it may be helpful to recollect the better qualities of youth — curiosity, experiment, recognition of good in others, and above all a sense of fun. Good luck!



HELGA WYLER

“**D**oing what you like is freedom. Liking what you do is happiness.”

A poster with these words and the picture of a bird, soaring before white clouds in the blue sky, hung on the wall of my office for many years.

All through my life as a homemaker, wife, mother, office worker and civic-minded interested citizen, I strived for the happiness of “liking what you do.” I achieved that goal to a great extent: saw the family grow up and be successful on their own, saw the home become the haven and the refuge it is meant to be, was well liked and appreciated in the working place and in the community. The freedom was to come upon retirement.

Retirement came.

To my great delight I have learned that there is no need to choose between happiness and freedom. The freedom is added to the happiness.

This is what being a senior means to me:

- Freedom to do what I like,
- Freedom to like what I do
- Freedom to be myself with enthusiasm and abandonment
- Freedom to like myself as I am
- Freedom to choose the giving
- Freedom to give to myself
- Time for all this glorious living
- Joy to be alive
- HAPPINESS.



MARION FIELDS WYLLIE

Being a senior citizen means having a perspective on life that I could not have achieved at an earlier age. Little things that once loomed large, little fears, resentments, irritations, have shrunk in importance. Small pleasures have grown larger in proportion.

I used to take the love of my near-and-dear for granted. Now it enwraps me like a comforter. Once I took health for granted. Now I budget my strength, setting priorities for activity. Each hour of well-being is precious now. My tomorrows used to be taken for granted, too. Now it is important to have my affairs so ordered as to leave my loved ones minimum confusion and conflict.

In youth I was constrained to defer to older people. In return they shared experience, taught me such little skills as I was willing to learn, and their gentle chiding sometimes saved me from meanness and blunders. Their wisdom kept me humble. Their disabilities called for my understanding. Their dignity made me proud to belong to them.

Now they are gone, and I have, of necessity, assumed the elder role. This means I must strive to merit the respect once owed to others. It means remembering those others respected my individuality and potential, so that respect must be mutual between myself and younger folk. It means, too, sharing with the young some accounts of my youth, not as exemplary, but as an amusing tale of trial and error.

It is now my role to show a gentle concern and a wise forbearance for errors of the young. I must concede some decline in strength, but I need not play on their sympathies. It is my privilege to assert my self-worth in ways that cause them no embarrassment, but rather even a little pride in their old lady.

Being a senior citizen also means living in a changed and ever-changing world, remembering that it has always been changing. It means accepting change, not with utter passivity but with tolerance and a will to understand.



PETER YOUNG

What a wonderful feeling to wake up at 6 a.m. on a wintry morning and realize that you don't have to get up for work. It means you are free! That euphoria may last for about three weeks, according to one retiree, before reaction sets in. We see another aspect at our tennis club when younger members start to talk shop. We realize then that seniors move in different worlds; they are no longer in the "main stream."

Yet one of the sweetest meanings to being a senior is having the time to do the things we often swore that we would love to do "if only we had the time." Which means that seniors can have a lifestyle that younger people envy.

Night school classes I have taken had a large percentage of seniors. I took my first piano lessons in one of those classes after retirement and hope to play forever. We are in a group of retired couples who rotate in giving dinner parties. One hostess, a youthful 86, enjoys the entertaining so much that she wants to take an extra turn. Remember walking? It is not only a wonderful exercise but a wonderful way to see the world up close. And haven't we all wished we could speak another language?

There are also sober meanings, such as reduced income. The steady paycheque, regularly increasing in size, belongs to the world we no longer move in. Income from savings painstakingly accumulated over the years shrinks as interest rates fall. The good news is that homes paid for in working years are not burdened with heavy monthly payments. Families are grown, excellent health insurance is free.

An unhappy meaning is realized when funerals outnumber weddings. Deteriorating health is an inescapable part of aging. What is more depressing than witnessing the passing of the companions of

one's youth? These are irretrievable losses but there are also good things which age cannot cancel out. If you had the pleasure in watching the gambols of youthful creatures — children, puppies, kittens — these things will always be there. Good company, good books and movies, good meals and drinks, these are for all ages to enjoy.

Being a senior definitely means losing some of the things which made life good. But it also means that a full life is still within your reach. Look for the gold in the “golden years” and go for it.



GEMS

Selected excerpts from other essays

TO BE a senior is to have a lot of the answers but nobody asks you the questions.
— *Louise Boddy, North York*

IT MEANS that when my little granddaughter calls out loud, "Grandma knows best," I feel a bit proud.
— *Mabel Braidwood, Toronto*

AND WHAT'S the world coming to? Well, let's go along and see.
— *Elizabeth Culley, Ottawa*

MAYBE a senior is a complete person. Yes, loving God, ourselves and our neighbours as ourselves should do it.
— *A. Adamzyk, Renfrew*

WE HAVE a pocketful of courage and strength to catch a little star. I am a very lucky senior. But, not at Bingo.
— *Mabel Belle Allain, Toronto*

I SAY to myself, I did something good in my life since God did give me long years.
— *Maria Bohme, 83, Thornhill*

THE ONE great delight seniors have is acquiring grandchildren. No one ever tells us what an unexpectedly magical pleasure there is in holding one's first grandchild.
— *Evelyn J. Broy, Windsor*

IF ONE stops to think of it, the story of growing old can never be told, so full it is of faces, dearly loved and familiar faces, strangers' faces, all deeply marked with laughter and tears.—*Dorothy Card, Pickering*

I STILL love to swat a baseball, or go for a swim in a cool lake, or skate in the local arena. For a few brief moments I am Wayne Gretzky, flying down the ice with the puck on my stick. I shoot into an empty net, and hear the cheers from the deserted stands. I wave my arms in victory as the crowd roars. For a few minutes I am ageless.

—Roy L. Conwell, *Fenelon Falls*

IN OCTOBER, my husband died in his sleep. I was heartbroken, but since, I have thanked the Good Lord for his kindness, when I see other husbands lying there, not knowing their wives.

—Luella Donaldson, *Mount Forest*

I LOVE to play Bingo, and seldom win, but I win in other ways. I have a few friends and many acquaintances.—Jean M. D'Arcy, *London*

FINALLY, a senior is the man who suddenly realizes that the little old grey-haired lady helping him across the road is his wife.

—James Dron, *Ottawa*

YOU SHOP for shoes and try on a pair of men's oxfords which feel good on your feet that ache now and then from arthritis. You require a Size 10 wide. In 1930, you wore a 6 Triple A, with spike heels, as you danced the Charleston in the Graystone Ballroom.

—Viola Dooling, *Renfrew*

I HAVE all these reasons to be thankful, but what pleases me most of all — I guess you could call it the icing on the cake — is that I do not have to learn the mysterious ways in which a computer works.

—Wilhelmina Dirks, *Thornloe*

IT IS with consternation that I realize I have 24-year-old grandchildren. How did they get so old, while I remain so young?

—Owen Going, *Port Colborne*

ONE OF the real things is your wife. It's great to look at the young birds but your wife, remember, is no older than you feel. If you are an old, worn-out machine, that's what she will be, but if you are a young tiger at heart then she will regularly jump over the moon with you.

— *Joe Giroux, Sudbury*

Etre une femme, ça veut dire aussi qu'après avoir vécu des années de travail et de dévouement d'un travail ardu pour élever une nombreuse famille, le coeur d'une personne âgée bat au ralenti... le coeur souffre de la solitude, de l'oubli des enfants qu'ils aiment toujours (eux aussi sans doute aiment toujours leurs parents) mais vous savez la vie moderne les accaparent beaucoup... — *Marie-Rose Girard, Cochrane*

Joseph, menuisier, est entré dans l'âge d'or comme on entre dans un métier nouveau ou plutôt comme on entreprend une nouvelle construction. Il n'a pas dit adieu au marteau et à la scie... Il n'a pas mis de côté ces valeureux compagnons de sa vie. Au contraire, il les destine maintenant au service des siens. Autrement il aurait l'impression d'être inutile. En un sens, il a raison. Comment peut-on changer une habitude à cet âge? — *Romuald Gravel, Cornwall*

IT IS great to be a little selfish in the mornings, and think of all the younger people going to work to replenish the coffers of the pension funds so that we get our cheques at the end of the month.

— *A. Jenkins, Downsview*

La personne âgée doit vivre une journée à la fois et encourager les autres à faire ainsi... Certaines gens, à cause de maladies ou parce qu'ils se croient vieux, s'amputent eux-mêmes des joies de vivre, alors que d'autres, au-delà de quatre-vingt ans, sont prêts à se remarier. Il ne faut pas que la retraite soit celle de la vie, mais celle du travail rémunéré. Il faut à tout prix rester actif.

— *Gilberte Binette Legault, Châte à Blondeau*

THE LOOK of admiration and love as a grandchild sits on your lap is what being a senior is all about. If you have that and your health, you are indeed a fortunate person. — *Harold Lemmon, Windsor*

Ce n'est pas l'âge qui a de l'importance, c'est l'état d'esprit dans lequel on vieillit. — *Elizabeth Levesque, Iroquois Falls*

I HAVE now developed the ability to relax and look with interest at the world stage and enjoy the performers. Shakespeare was right even if Barnum wasn't. — *David McCalmont, Niagara Falls*

WE PAY income tax every three months. I guess the government doesn't trust us to live the full year. — *Charles Purdon, Weston*

Arrivé à un certain âge ou un âge certain, les intérêts de la vie doivent continuer: lire, écrire. C'est bon pour le moral, ça stimule le cerveau. Bricolez, faites travailler vos doigts encore agiles, créez des choses; le talent qui sort fait la boîte aux trésors... Plus on a de maturité, plus on peut créer. Il faut l'enthousiasme de la jeunesse et la richesse de l'expérience. Les gens blasés, aigris, qui ne sont plus capables d'émerveillement se tarissent beaucoup plus vite.

— *Jeannette Rivard, Cobalt*

PERSONALLY I have no fear of death. But dear Lord give me a few more sunrises and sunsets and a little more TIME to look out the window, at the trees, the grass, the flowers, the snow, the shadows in late afternoon, the birds and all the things He gave us for our pleasure.

— *Lavonia June Vivian, Toronto*



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